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ABSTRACT

The dissertation examines approaches to the development of artistically gifted students. Benjamin West's life is used to depict self-training and Thomas Eakins's life to illustrate development through a mentor approach. Evaluation of definitional and identification issues is examined along with changes in educational options for artistically gifted students. Individual chapters review salient features of the lives and work of West and Eakins and a final section points out the importance of establishing an objective procedure for identifying students with talents in the visual arts and on nurturing the talents of master teachers such as West and Eakins. The value of humanistic interdisciplinary learning is also stressed. (CL)

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The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

School of Visual Arts

The Contemporaneousness of the Past: Historical Reflections on Artistic Giftedness

A Thesis in

Art Education

by

Raymond G. Wilkins

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 1983

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ABSTRACT

Understanding is a participation
in the stream of tradition, in a
moment which mixes past and present.

Hans Georg Gadamer

This study answers the question: How does the gifted individual become an artist within the context of contemporary, public education? The focus of this study is on the artistically gifted student, the special needs which surround his development, and the relationship that exists between past and present artists. History plays an important part in the development of this thesis, since it is through our understanding of the past that we are able to understand the present.

Research has revealed that there are essentially two dominant modes of artistic development that have existed in America, and abroad, for at least the past 240 years. Benjamin West, eighteenth-century American artist, represents the first path to be taken. This form of education takes place without specific instruction in art; rather, the individual develops following his own interests and logic.

Thomas Eakins, nineteenth-century American artist, was selected to represent the more popular path of development in which a mentor is responsible for the direction to be taken. Like West, Eakins shared the classification as "gifted"; unlike him however, his development followed specific direction under the supervision of Gerome, his mentor, and through instruction at the French Academy, and the Ecole des Beaux-Artes.

Comparisons with contemporary methodology reveal that these two paths of development remain dominant today. Gifted young artists in our current educational structure either choose to follow their own course

of artistic endeavor, like Benjamin West; or, a mentor is responsible for the artistic path to be taken, as in the case of Thomas Eakins.

Current literature discloses the need to cope with the difficulties surrounding the education of the artistically gifted student. Important areas of concern addressed by this investigation are: what are the characteristics of the artistically gifted; how are they identified as gifted; who are the best teachers for these students; and, what is the best program for the realization of their maximum potential?

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PREFACE

This investigation was initiated to find answers to the many questions surrounding the education of the artistically gifted student, and to reveal the manner in which this unique individual develops within the framework of American public education. It was anticipated that history might provide insights from which contemporary, educational methodology relevant to the artistically gifted might evolve; this aspect of the inquiry was definitely realized. Additionally significant, however, is the educative function provided by this study. The reader is urged to pursue the study of this dissertation with a duality of concerns. First, there is the obvious mainstream of thought which leads the reader through the presentation of the problems facing the gifted student in contemporary education, historical reflections on selected artists and their development, and ultimately, the impact of their artistic training on the education of the contemporary young artist. Secondly, and of equal significance, is the undercurrent of thought which pursues the establishment of a philosophical foundation upon which the education of the artistically gifted student might be built.

It is hoped that the reader will find this investigation informative with regard to achieving a better understanding of the artistically gifted student and his education, as well as vital to the establishment of a meaningful philosophy from which programmatic concerns for these students might evolve. It is recommended that this work be read with a conscious regard for this inherent duality.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Kenneth R. Beittel, and Dr. Joseph J. Kockelmans, for their assistance and encouragement in

writing of this thesis; I am indebted to them for broadening the horizons of my experience at this University. I echo the feelings that Thomas Eakins had for his mentor, Gerome, in my regard for these two great teachers. Eakins said:

> A teacher can do very little for a pupil and should only be thankful if he doesn't hinder him; and, the greater the master, mostly the less he can say.

I also wish to thank Dr. Alice M. Schwartz for her valuable direction, influence and kindness. I especially wish to thank my wife and children for their patience and constant support in the pursuit of this degree.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

AND

PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

This inquiry begins with the desire to understand the nature of artistic giftedness, and to answer the question: How does the gifted artist become an artist in contemporary society? History provides us with rich biographies of famous artists, revealing unique paths of development in different time periods, and frequently citing evidence of "genius" or special gifts which are linked with divine inspiration.

It has been the supposition until recent years that the gifted student would succeed in learning regardless of the teacher, and with little regard for his learning environment; like cream in milk, he would rise to the top. This theory was the modis operandi through at least the first half of the twentieth century; only recently has this view been challenged. Until the 1970 U.S. Congressional mandate which called for a status report on gifted education, the exceptional student was like any other.

Currently, however, educational leaders in this country have become increasingly aware of the special needs of the gifted, and are studying alternatives to capitalize on the vast potential of these bright and talented individuals. Numerous articles and texts have proliferated in the last ten years, focusing on the developmental characteristics, methods

of identification, educational needs, learning strategies, and a variety of curricula designed to develop the maximum potential of the gifted student. Unfortunately, this attention has centered on the academically gifted student and his developmental needs, failing to acknowledge that the artistically gifted has different needs and developmental characteristics.

It would be helpful, at this point, to define "artistically gifted" with reference to its use in this writing. A gifted student possesses some natural abilities or talents that distinguishes him from his peers; this individual is thought of as a highly-motivated student in the above average to superior range of intelligence. The student who is gifted in art, therefore, is a highly motivated student with above average to superior intelligence who demonstrates unusual abilities in the visual arts.

Contemplation of the initial question in this inquiry prompted thinking about additional questions. How does the artistically gifted student differ from the academically gifted? What special programs are needed to satisfy the needs of the gifted in art? Can the art educator challenge the learning of this student like any other student, or is additional educational training necessary? Also relevant are such questions as: What is the function of the artist today? What part does he play in society? How does the gifted young artist perceive the world today? What does it mean to become part of the long and rich tradition we call art?

Society has encouraged its artists to record their feelings and impressions of the world throughout the history of civilization. The

visual history that exists as a result is detailed with vivid portrayals of these feelings and impressions, providing a vast source of information which enriches our appreciation and understanding of a given era. Although the artist has alternately enjoyed and suffered varied status throughout history, his part in society eventually elevated to one of importance.

Clearly, history will establish the credibility necessary to arrive at answers to the many questions raised in this investigation. It is important to study gifted students and artists of the past in order to understand artistic giftedness in contemporary education. Specific methods of artistic development that might be relevant to the education of the gifted young artist today will be reviewed and evaluated. This researcher feels strongly that history will provide meaningful insights which will help to establish current directions vital to the education of the artistically gifted student. The philosophy of Hans Georg Gadamer adds clarity to this idea:

> The present is seen and understood only through the intentions, ways of seeing and preconceptions bequeathed from the past . . . [the past] is a stream in which we move and participate. . . .[1]

Ultimately, the focus of this investigation will center on the process of becoming an artist. Does the gifted young artist follow a unique path of development today that differs significantly from other eras, or are there important similarities? Does he develop independently within the structure of his own personal world, unaffected by "formal" instruction or art concerns? Or is there more commonly a major influence, such as a mentor, who molds the early artistic efforts of the gifted

student in art? What part does our current technological society play in the development of the young artist?

It is the view of this researcher that artists become artists by following two dominant paths of development. The first path to be taken is determined solely by the individual himself, following a direction that seems best at a given point in time. The primitive artist, whether in the prehistoric, or more recent reference, is an example of this form of development. Since "primitive" merely suggests that an individual has had no formal training, it is conceivable that a contemporary artist might arrive at some stature as an artist without formal training or education in art. (The early American itinerant painters are distant examples of this form of artist, and Grandma Moses is a twentieth century example.) The second alternative to becoming an artist involves periods of strong influence from another artist or mentor. Usually, this is a person much admired by the young artist, and is emulated for either his artistic expertise or his intellect--or both. This is the more conventional path to be taken because of the long tradition of apprenticeship generally associated with artists in history. Naturally, the art educator of today might see himself as mentor to his students, whether in fact or fancy. The young artist who pursues this path of development is strongly influenced by the thinking and/or artistic direction of a specific individual, generally during the more intensive periods in his education. It will be seen that although young artists generally follow one path or the other in the development of their talent, there are also similarities in their education and experience.

The investigation that lies ahead will begin with a study of these two modes of artistic development. By understanding the manner in which gifted artists emerge in the history of art, insights will be gained for use in educating today's artistically gifted high school student, and in planning future programs that will challenge this special student. Gadamer asserts that:

> Understanding as such is always functioning simultaneously in three modes of temporality: past, present, and future. For the understanding of history . . . the past can never be seen as object in the past with an absolute separation from us in the present and future.[2]

A survey of the history of American art reveals many individuals who might serve as representatives of these two modes of learning. Although the primary focus of this study is the manner in which artists develop, there is also interest in their eventual role as teachers. (Due to the frequency of occurrence that history illustrates, wherein artists become teachers later in life, it will become difficult to separate these two aspects of artistic activity.)

The eighteenth century will be the most distant time period that is relevant to this investigation due to the absence of important artists in America in earlier times. Certainly there were itinerant artists in this country before the eighteenth century, but it is important to establish that these artists received no formal art education--their work might be regarded as a practical art, such as sign painting, rather than as "fine art." Although it might be argued that a primitive artist such as Edward Hicks represents a high level of achievement for his time, his artistic activity took place without concern for the study of art, or other artists. Rather, it is intended that this study will follow the

deveopment of artists whose intent was the pursuit of art, and an understanding of the works of other artists.

Benjamin West was chosen to serve as an example of the self-trained artists of the eighteenth century because of his artistic prominence, and also because of his reputation as the teacher of the next generation of prominent American painters. Equally important in the selection of this artist is the determination of his artistic giftedness by his parents, peers and members of the community. Especially unique is that West was a Quaker and was faced with the problem of the suitability of art as an occupation by his religious community.

The artist chosen to represent the more formalized mode of development, in which a mentor is involved, is Thomas Eakins, nineteenth century American painter. He was selected because of his unusually prolonged training as a painter, his strong relationship with his mentor Gerome, and his distinguished career as a teacher in Philadelphia. It is interesting that both West and Eakins began their lives as artists in the Philadelphia vicinity, became artists in very different ways, and obtained prominence as both an artist, and as a teacher later in life.

It is anticipated that a study of the lives of these individuals, and the manner in which each became an artist, might reveal meaningful insights for the teacher of the artistically gifted student in contemporary education. Comparisons of characteristics of giftedness, methods of identification, and suitability of programs for the education of the gifted artists over a span of 240 years, should provide the art educator of the 1980s with sufficient background to design programs that will satisfy the needs of the gifted student in the present, and in the future.

Consequently, the interrelationship of past, present and future is necessary to the understanding of the artistically gifted student, and his educational needs. Gadamer reveals that:

> There is no pure seeing and understanding of history without reference to the present. On the contrary, history is seen and understood only and always through a consciousness standing in the present. . . .[3]

The relevance of this inquiry to present concerns of the art educator lies in the understanding to be gained from this historical investigation of artistic giftedness. It is my assertion that programs for the gifted in art may find their basis in history.

A thorough analysis of contemporary issues in gifted education will accompany this investigation. An update on the status of the gifted/talented since the 1970 U.S. Congressional mandate referred to earlier, should reveal similarities and contrasts with previously-existing programs. Have the methods of identification of the gifted changed in recent years? What programs exist in contemporary education that satisfy the special needs of the artistically gifted? Do model programs exist? How do they differ from programs for the academically gifted student?

A search of current literature should reveal answers to some of these questions, and should provide interesting comparisons with what shall be found in history. The combined resources of the National Art Education Association, and the Council for Exceptional Children, both located in Reston, Virginia, will be utilized to determine their relevance to this investigation. Dr. John Mahlmann, Executive Director of the National Art Education Association, and Mr. John Grossi, Program Director of the Council for Exceptional Children, will be interviewed to

acquire first-hand knowledge of their professional insights and experience.

It is anticipated that by combining an historical investigation, a search of current literature, interviews with informed educational leaders, and ten years of personal involvement in programs for the artistically gifted, significant insights will be revealed which are relevant to contemporary, gifted education.

The specific problems to be addressed by this investigation are vital to the education of the gifted young artist in the 1980s. The following are the significant points upon which this study will focus, which will permeate the thinking of this researcher throughout the remaining chapters of this dissertation:

1. What are the characteristics of the artistically gifted?
2. What methods of identification are the most reliable?
3. What are the educational needs of the artistically gifted?
4. What programs will best meet these needs?
5. What are the characteristics of the gifted teacher?
6. Can these characteristics be developed?

These questions will be answered in this study, as well as questions which will be generated as this investigation unfolds. Although the education of the gifted artist in contemporary American public education is the motivating force which initiates this study, it is ultimately intended that a contribution will be made toward the development of a philosophical foundation upon which the educational needs of the artistically gifted student might be laid. It is the goal of this writer to understand the gifted young artist and his needs, and to be enlightened

by the path that this exploration will follow. Gadamer asserts that:

> It suffices to say that one understands differently when one understands at all.[4]

So it is with this investigation.

Chapter I

NOTES

[1]Richard E. Palmer. Hermeneutics. Evanston, Illinois. Northwestern University Press. 1969. pp. 176-

[2]Ibid, p. 180.

[3]Ibid, p. 176.

[4]Ibid, p. 185.

CHAPTER II

THE ARTISTICALLY GIFTED INDIVIDUAL IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION: IDENTIFYING AND SATISFYING THEIR NEEDS

It shall be seen that individuals become artists through two dominant modes of development--self-motivation as exemplified by Benjamin West in the eighteenth century, and apprenticeship, as practiced by Thomas Eakins in the nineteenth century. Although in both cases it took several years to acquire the expertise necessary for a career in art, each artist followed a very different path to reach this goal. Also to be emphasized are the environment in which these two young men began their work, and their eventual decisions to teach drawing and painting to younger generations of American artists. Underlying the study of these two artists is their designation, bestowed by their peers and teachers, as gifted individuals, and the recognition both men received as such.

The relevance of this investigation lies in the relationships which exist between two specific figures in the history of art, their individual paths of learning, and the applicability of this process to gifted art students in contemporary society. Comparisons shall be made among the concepts of giftedness to be found in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries to provide the contemporary artist/educator with an understanding of its evolution.

The current definition "gifted" is provided by the U.S. Office of Education, and is the result of the historic "Marland Report."[1] It is instructive here to briefly summarize the events which lead to the formulation of the following definition of giftedness. The Marland Report was in response to the 1970 Congressional Mandate (Public Law 91-230, Section

806) for a status report on the education of gifted and talented children. Following an intensive national study, the U. S. Commissioner of Education, S. P. Marland, Jr., delivered the report to Congress in October of 1971. It serves as a national guideline for developing programs for the gifted as well as for recommendations for the identification of these special students. The definition of giftedness is a vital part of this document. It states:

> Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.
>
> Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combination:
>
> 1. general intellectual ability
> 2. specific academic aptitude
> 3. creative or productive thinking
> 4. leadership ability
> 5. visual and performing arts
> 6. psychomotor ability
>
> It can be assumed that utilization of these criteria for identification of the gifted and talented will encompass a minimum of 3 to 5 percent of the school population.
>
> Evidence of gifted and talented abilities may be determined by a multiplicity of ways. These procedures should include objective measures and professional evaluation measures and professional evaluation measures which are essential components of identification.
>
> Professionally qualified persons include such individuals as teachers, administrators, school psychologists, counselors, curriculum specialists, artists, musicians, and others with special training who are also qualified to appraise pupil's special competencies.[2]

Public Law 91-230, Section 806, is a landmark document in the education of gifted and talented children and has served as a benchmark for the development of programs or documents concerning the gifted student and his education.

The use of the words "gifted and talented" can be interpreted with a certain irony, however. There is a potential problem when the words gifted and talented are combined, as they become open to misinterpretation; controversies have stemmed from this phrase since its inception. Does it mean, for example, that a child has to be gifted and talented to be considered gifted? Does it also mean that an artistically talented individual must also be intellectually gifted? Does intellectually gifted reject the notion that an artistically talented child can also be referred to as gifted? The questions raised surpass mere semantics.

The duality of the phrase "gifted and talented" has created a division of affinities for one or the other of the two concepts resulting in the formation of two "camps." This inherent disparity has generated much discussion and argument in the last decade, much of it centering upon the cognitive-affective learning issue. The technological nature of our society encourages the development of the word "gifted" to suggest superior cognitive ability, and the word "talented" to be reserved for special abilities which lie outside this domain, generally relating to the arts. E. Paul Torrance presents strong arguments which promote the idea of the interrelationship of the two domains of intelligence as being the most vital course of human development. In his book, Guiding Creative Talent, this issue is explored in depth. He raises many questions which stem from his conviction.

> What is called for is a far cry from the model of the quiz-program champion of a few years ago. Instead of trying to cram a lot of facts into the minds of children and make them scientific encyclopedias, we must ask what kind of children they are becoming. What kind of thinking do they do? How resourceful are they? Are they becoming more responsible? Are they learning to give thoughtful explanations of the things they do and see? Do they believe their

> own ideas to be of value? Can they share ideas and opinions with others? Do they relate similar experiences together in order to draw conclusions? Do they do some thinking for themselves?[3]

Torrance has gained respect as a pioneer in the development of creative measurement and testing. His well known Torrance Test of Creative Thinking has become a standard element in the battery of tests used in determining giftedness. Torrance refers to the philosophy of Abraham H. Maslow[4] as one which concerns itself with the development with the overall issue raised earlier: the interrelationship of cognitive and affective modes of learning. Maslow supports the thinking that initiated Torrance's questions and offers some solutions in the following statement:

> Education is learning to grow, learning what to grow toward, learning what is good and bad, learning what is desirable and undesirable, learning what to choose and what not to choose. In this realm of intrinsic learning, intrinsic teaching, and intrinsic education, I think that the arts . . . are so close to our phychological and biological core, so close to this identity, this biological identity . . . they must become basic experiences in education. I mean that this kind of education can be a glimpse into the infinite, into ultimate values. Such experiences could well serve as the model, the means by which perhaps we could rescue the rest of the school curriculum from the value-free, value-neutral, goal-less meaninglessness into which it has fallen.[5]

These comments by Maslow from his book Farther Reaches of Human Nature brings our focus back to the realm of the arts, the broader topic of this investigation.

It would be valuable at this point to develop a definition relating specifically to those individuals gifted in the arts. Little exists in literature beyond Torrance's work that helps to provide a valid measure of the cognitive aspects of creative thinking. References to the definition in P. L. 91-230 place the responsibility of identification of the gifted in the hands of:

> Professionally qualified persons . . . such as teachers, administrators, school psychologists, counselors, curriculum specialists, artists, musicians, and others with special training who are also qualified to appraise pupil's special competencies.[6]

The subjectivity of this form of identification leaves much to be desired. This problem has existed for many years and will not be dealt with in this paper, as the collective efforts of many qualified individuals to find a solution has produced little more than this. Rather, energies will be spent on the continued pursuit of an operational definition of giftedness in the arts.

The following definition, although based on research, has its origin in the life experience of this researcher. It should be interpreted as operational in the broad sense wherein it encompasses the arts in general, as well as in the specific sense wherein gifted students in the individual disciplines of art, music, dance, theater and creative writing, can be defined. This researcher feels that an individual identified as artistically gifted demonstrates a high level of self-motivation, is capable of pursuing creative work independently and in substantial depth, and possesses an exceptional facility for solving problems of an artistic nature; who concurrently illustrates keen, inherent intellectual ability, regardless of its manifestation through high scholastic performance and/or achievement on standardized tests of intelligence. The separation of components in this definition permits reference to the single disciplines in the arts, thereby making it specifically visual arts giftedness, music giftedness, dramatic arts giftedness, etc.

It is intended by this definition that the duality of cognitive-affective operations exist in the artistically gifted individual. "Regardless of its manifestation" provides the flexibility salient to

such a definition since many individuals who are gifted in the arts are inherently intelligent but either choose not to express this intelligence cognitively, or concentrate their interest in non-academic matters.

What must now be addressed is how the needs of the artistically gifted individual in the contemporary educational context can be met. How would the needs of a young Benjamin West or Thomas Eakins, for example, be met today? Should the gifted young artist be left to his own resources, to develop his artistic gifts without the benefit of professional direction? Would it be possible for his gifts to be developed at all within the current technologically-oriented school curriculum?

Solutions to these concerns are offered in Someone's Priority: The Issues and Recommendations on the State of the Arts and Gifted in America,[7] edited by Edward Larsh. This text is a compilation of papers and addresses delivered at the National Forum on the Arts and the Gifted held in Aspen, Colorado in June of 1978, by the U. S. Office of Education. The primary objective of the conference was "to develop a series of recommendations for the governmental agencies which will aid them in formulating future policies for the arts and the gifted."[8] Participants in the conference included writers, artists, educators, administrators, conductors, and teachers from all parts of the United States. They shared the common belief that:

> . . . in the arts we have some basic humane values which are the core of contemporary and past civilizations. And what we're trying to do at a conference like this, is by sharing the experiences of musicians, poets, writers, educators, and organizers of the arts, find ways in which the basic values in human life can be celebrated as part of the school system.[9]

The Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies hosted this stimulating conference, and provided ideal conditions for the generation of productive thinking. Larsh felt that the conditions were ideal for:

> . . . freeing the conference participants to concentrate and develop national and state policy initiatives for the arts and the gifted which will aid in making the arts a more integral part of all of our lives.[10]

What followed was a variety of general sessions, workshops, and performances in which participants delivered addresses, artists and musicians performed, and leading arts education advocates interacted regarding the arts and the gifted student. Among the issues and recommendations which resulted from the conference was an overwhelming endorsement of the idea that the arts should be a vital part of a basic education for all children. It was agreed that:

> The arts are a springboard to all learning. The arts . . . are basic to education and are valuable tools for inculcating interest in, and mastery of, other educational skills.[11]

In an excerpt from a speech delivered by Edwin Martin, Deputy Commissioner, U. S. Office of Education, the philosophy of Carl Jung is cited:

> . . . there must be a balancing between cognition and feeling, between the intellect and the arts . . . it is necessary if we are to create whole human beings out of our educational system.[12]

There is definitely a need for balance in the total education of the student. This need was defended in the philosophy of Carl Jung, in the writings of E. Paul Torrance and Abraham H. Maslow, by the majority of individuals at the Aspen Conference, and it shall be seen that this need was felt by Benjamin West in the eighteenth century and by Thomas Eakins in the nineteenth century. It is the common view among these

individuals that the arts should be an integral part of education for all students, as well as for the student who wishes to pursue a career in the arts. An imbalance can exist for either of these individuals. Regarding the academically gifted:

> . . . most of the time they are encouraged to do more geometry, more calculus, more advanced this and that, and are hardly viewed in terms of their involvement and relationship to the arts.[13]

On the other side, the following statement by Edward Martin gives criticism to the traditional gifted programs:

> . . . as we've worked on programs for gifted and talented youngsters we've seen that traditionally they've emphasized only the academically bright youngsters, and have not looked into youngsters who have talents in the arts. We'd like to broaden our emphsis on children who have unusual abilities in the arts and to stimulate the schools to meet their needs.[14]

Concern exists for both the student who is gifted in the arts, and for the academically gifted student and his/her arts experiences. Meeting the needs of the artistically gifted student begins with the process of identifying them--a difficult and often random process of identification. Edward Larsh reveals, "At present there is an extreme difficulty in identifying young people with a high potential in the arts."[15] Unlike existing intelligence tests which are used to identify academically gifted students, a comparable, reliable counterpart for identifying students who are gifted in the arts has not as yet been designed. Larsh states:

> At present, we do not have codified, credible means for identifying the gifted [in the arts]. Many parents and teachers who could be helpful in alleviating this problem lack adequate information and training because there is no general body of knowledge, no guidelines, which could be disseminated to school systems across the country . . . many young people . . . are overlooked simply because no one knew what to look for. And even when tested within a general school setting, many of the gifted . . . fail to be recognized because of inappropriately designed testing procedures.[16]

He further reveals that although methods of identifying students gifted in the arts, such as art competitions, auditions, teacher and parent nomination, peer judgment, professional talent evaluation, etc., have managed to reveal some talented students, there has not been any organized, reliable, national plan. The National Task Force on the Arts and the Gifted recommends that:

> . . . the means must be found for recognizing talent in areas other than those which are most obvious, and for developing the sensitivity to the divergent cultural contexts in which their talents may express themselves.[17]

The Aspen Conference revealed other problems inherent in meeting the needs of the artistically gifted student. A significant problem concerns the role of the arts in a child's basic education: are the arts considered "basic"? Larsh argues that:

> One of the most formidable tasks faced by individuals involved in arts education is creating the climate, through increased awareness, that the arts are as basic to learning as writing and mathematical skills.[18]

This position is reinforced by A. Graham Down, Executive Director of the Council for Basic Education, in his article Art, Basic Education, and the Back to Basics Movement. He states:

> The Council for Basic Education believes that the arts, properly defined and well taught, have generative powers, and that the arts should be included among the basic subjects all students take in school.[19]

Larsh feels that a major problem exists in the ability of arts educators to "communicate adequately enough and convincingly enough to those who need to be convinced, that the arts are basic to education."[20]

Another problem confronting the artistically gifted is one which has been associated with gifted programs in general for many years--programs for the gifted are "elitist"; undemocratic. It is commonly

held by many parents that children who participate in programs designed only for gifted students will develop a superior attitude toward their "ordinary" peers.[21] In fact, however, the reverse is very often true. Bright students often develop feelings of inferiority when confronted with how much knowledge can be learned.[22]

The 1971 report to Congress, "Education of the Gifted and Talented" (commonly referred to as the Marland Report), addressed this issue:

> The relatively few gifted students who have had the advantage of special programs have shown remarkable improvements in self-understanding and in ability to relate well to others, as well as in improved academic and creative performance. The programs have not produced arrogant, selfish snobs; special programs have extended a sense of reality, wholesome humility, self-respect, and respect for others. . . .[23]

The question of "elitism" became an issue among the participants at the Aspen Conference, also. The concern was manifested in the question of whether arts educators should spend their energies designing general arts programs, or art programs for the gifted. Following much debate, the participants agreed that both programs should be developed because:

> . . . of the need to integrate the arts in our society for the benefit of all of our citizens, and because of the need to develop the special artistic potential of our gifted, for them as well as for our society.[24]

It is important to remember that students have equal rights concerning development of their fullest potential, whether their particular gift manifests itself athletically, scientifically, or artistically. It appears undemocratic, rather than elitist, to exclude options for the artistically gifted. Music conductor Murry Sidlin says:

> . . . democratic education means appropriate educational opportunities and the right to education in keeping with one's ability to benefit. . . .[25]

It is often assumed that students who are truly gifted will develop their special abilities regardless of circumstance. It is further assumed that individuals in this category are easily identified, either through existing tests or through teacher/parent recognition. According to Larsh, these suppositions are not true.[26] James J. Gallagher, in Teaching the Gifted Child, refers to the problems that surround what he terms the "gifted under-achiever." He feels:

> The failure of young people to make reasonable use of manifest talent is probably one of the most frustrating experiences for conscientious educators.[27]

Whether the individual's giftedness is cognitive or artistic, it must first be recognized if it is to be nurtured. And, since the education process begins early in life, the sooner the cultivation of his gifts begins, the better.

Gallagher feels that creativity is a desirable quality in all gifted children, and it is the function of the educational system to encourage and foster its development.[28] He makes a strong statement concerning the importance of creativity in contemporary society.

> In a rapidly changing culture, with whole new fields of study coming into existence in the space of five to ten years, while other occupations are going out of existence, the preparation of the young for their role in such a dynamic society becomes more complex.[29]

He quotes C. Silberman's Crisis in the Classroom in reference to the application of creativity to education. Silberman says:

> To be practical, an education should prepare a man for a work that doesn't yet exist and whose nature cannot even be imagined.[30]

Gallagher claims that the definition most often used for creativity is "the transformation of old information to solve new problems."[31] He

refers to Maslow and his "self-actualized" person as an example of the creative person. Maslow feels that the healthy person is one who creates, and places the creative person at the center of our concern for education. He states that:

> What I am really interested in is the new kind of education which we must develop which moves toward fostering the new kind of human being that we need, the process person, the creative person, the improvising person, the self-trusting, courageous person, the autonomous person.[32]

Both Gallagher and Maslow advocate that creativity is not unique to the artistically-gifted individual, despite the popular opposing view. Gallagher asserts that:

> A person can be a creative historian, scientist or plumber. "Creativity" is not something one does in a given time period during the day but is an attitude, a philosophy of life, that imbues and affects the whole scope of the educational program and of the life of the individual.[33]

This broader view of creativity definitely serves the earlier findings of the Aspen Conference which dealt with the arts as basic to education, and also underlies the larger philosophy of this author. What must be addressed, however, is the unique population on which this dissertation centers: the artistically gifted and his development. Gallagher classifies the creative artist as one who is a divergent thinker, characterized by a "free and open type of intellectual operation, in which the distinguishing characteristic is the large number of possible associations or problem solutions."[35] Additional qualities include originality, inventiveness, and an ability to produce with freshness and spontaneity.

The antithesis of this type, according to Gallagher, is the convergent thinker who "takes a large number of facts of associations, and puts

them together in certain predictable combinations to come out with the one right, possible answer."[36] It is unfortunate that educational programs currently emphasize convergent thinking and have little regard for the value of creativity. Gallagher claims that:

> Teachers often seem to know more about how to stamp out creativity than how to enhance it. This may be because standard teaching techniques lean toward group learning and social processes in the classroom rather than toward the stimulation of individualistic behavior that lies at the heart of creativity.[37]

This position is endorsed by Maslow in the following statement:

> Since classroom learning focuses on behavior rather than on thought, the child learns exactly how to behave while keeping his thoughts his own.[38]

These rather pessimistic claims by Gallagher were verified in a study he conducted in which groups of teachers were told to imagine that creativity was an undesirable quality for a child to demonstrate. They were then asked to give suggestions that would discourage creativity; perhaps even stamp it out altogether. He concluded that "no group of teachers failed to arrive quickly at a large number of suggestions, among which they easily recognized some of their own teaching practices."[39]

The "peak experiences"[40] to which Maslow refers concerning the best moments of one's life, would not be possible in a classroom devoid of creative thinking. He views the present school system as "an effective instrument for crushing peak experiences and forbidding their possibility."[41] He further perceives education as a system in which two opposing entities exists, each valuing conflicting goals. He observes that:

> If we look at education in our society, we see two sharply different factors. First of all there is the overwhelming majority of teachers, principals, curriculum planners, school superintendents, who are devoted to passing on the knowledge that children need in order to live in our industrialized society. . . . On the other hand, there is the minority of humanistically oriented educators who have as their goal the creation of better human beings. . . .[42]

It is the common position among the references cited, and in this paper as well, that the educational systems are not meeting the needs of all students; particularly, the creative students, and especially the artistically gifted students. Among the findings which resulted from the workshops and seminars at the Aspen Conference were recommendations calling for different kinds of schools, programs, and training for teachers, to meet the needs of the artistically gifted. The report from the workshop on Appreciation of the Arts urged the following action:

> . . . radical reform of teacher education programs and curricula to provide student teachers and in-service teachers with opportunities for practicing the arts as an integral part of their preparation to become teachers.

And:

> . . . each city of medium size or larger should have at least one school of the arts as an integral part of the local public school system, to which students could apply on the basis of their talent in the arts and could study in a curriculum containing the regular academic subjects with a parallel curriculum in the creative arts.[43]

Several cities around the country responded by establishing high schools for the arts, which greatly augmented the number of model schools already in existence.

Radical reform of teacher education, however, is quite another matter. Because of the economic restraints facing most communities in this country, arts programs are struggling for survival, and the argument for radical reform of teacher training is greatly weakened by this fact. Why should colleges and universities drastically alter their teaching programs to accommodate the integration of the arts as basic to their training? A status quo attitude prevails regarding the changes suggested by the Conference.

Another major problem confronting the education of the artistically gifted student is the testing procedure used to determine acceptance to universities or schools of art. Because of the lack of reliable tests of artistic giftedness these students follow the same admission procedures as applicants interested in mathematics or science. The Scholastic Aptitude Test, administered and scored by the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey, has very little credibility in the area of creative assessment; it is clearly a measure of the convergent thinking revealed earlier by Gallagher.

Ironically, selective colleges and universities require minimum scores of achievement for admission regardless of the anticipated field of study. The Aspen Conference called for:

> . . . a serious study of the effect of the national testing movement on the discovery of talent in the arts . . . the testing movement as it now operates . . . doesn't search out talent of a creative or intuitive sort . . . we find that the talents of the gifted in the arts are being ignored . . . we need to take a good hard look at the inhibition produced by the testing movement on the discovery of talent and on the role of art in the curriculum itself.[44]

Individuals whose interests and energies lie outside convergent thinking are penalized because standardized tests do not assess divergent thinking or creative efforts in the arts. The Aspen Conference acknowledged that a need exists for the establishement of a reliable screening device for the identification of the artistically gifted. Critical remarks at the conference concentrated on the nature of existing tests and revealed that:

> Since teachers do teach to the tests and exams, therefore, the content of the test determines the content of the curriculum and we have a circular effect of a negative sort in dealing with the arts. . . . Among other things this has meant that almost no

> attention has been paid to the qualifications for admission to college of those whose talents and gifts do not lie entirely within the academic examination system and whose qualifications are predominately, and sometimes extraordinarily, developed in the field of the creative arts.[45]

Among the many recommendations resulting from the Aspen Conference was one which called for the need for an evaluative device to identify the artistically gifted individual. In response to this need the Educational Testing Service, commonly referred to as E. T. S., initiated research in an effort to satisfy the needs of this special population. The staff at E. T. S. readily acknowledged the findings at Aspen in their publication ETS 1981 Annual Report, under a heading titled "New Service for Students." The following statement recognizes that:

> . . . there is a broader dimension to talent than academic ability alone. For many truly gifted students, a standardized test can predict success in the college or professional school classroom, but it cannot detect the hands of a Picasso, the voice of another Ella Fitzgerald, the feet of a Nijinsky, or the creative genius of a Shakespeare.[46]

The findings at Aspen stimulated E. T. S. to move forward with their long-standing interest in meeting the needs of the artistically gifted. William Turnbull was President of E. T. S. in 1979 when he conceived the Scholars in the Arts Program, designed to give national recognition to young students who were gifted in the areas of dance, music, theater, visual arts, and creative writing.[47] The program gained financial support from the Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the U. S. Office of Education, and the Natioanl Endowment for the Arts. In the autumn of 1980, the program was renamed the Arts Recognition and Talent Search (ARTS), and began its first full pilot year of operation. Nearly 4,000 applicants responded in the 1980-81 program; video or audio tapes of performances in dance, music, and theater, slides of visual art,

and writing samples were submitted for the adjudication process. More than 80 finalists were selected this first year, each receiving a small scholarship, and 21 of these were designated by the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars to receive Presidential Scholar Medallions and an additional scholarship grant. In addition to this distinction, E. T. S. prompted colleges, universities, and professional training programs to offer scholarships and apprenticeships to further encourage the advanced training of the nation's artistically gifted students.

The application procedure for the ARTS Program is lengthy and very comprehensive. First, the applicant must demonstrate his or her writing and thinking skills by answering several essay questions. Teacher assessments and guidance counselor recommendations then follow, based on the student's performance in a variety of disciplines. And, finally and most important, the applicant must submit examples of his or her art works. After several weeks, the applicant is notified of the semi-final results, following which the winners were flown to Miami, Florida to compete for finalist status. The final adjudication process is thorough and objective; a panel of distinguished artists and art educators view the original art works which had previously been seen in slides, video or audio tape form, and interview each applicant concerning their career plans and aspirations. Finally, the panel monitors the execution of three works of art in a controlled studio setting. The results of the assessment of each student are then sent to E. T. S. in Princeton, New Jersey, where this information becomes a part of the individual application package begun earlier. The number of finalists is left to the discretion of the panel in each area of the arts; there were a total of 85

finalists, 20 of which were in the visual arts. Further recommendations are then made by E. T. S. to the Commission on Presidential Scholars for consideration as Scholars in the Arts. In the future, E. T. S. will continue to administer all activities associated with the ARTS Program application and adjudication processes, but financial backing and policy-making decisions will come from the newly-created non-profit organization, the National Foundation for the Advancement in the Arts.

Although the ARTS Program attempts to recognize the artistically gifted student, and does so with objectivity and a high degree of professionalism, recognition and identification is determined at the end of the student's secondary school education, since he must be in his senior year to participate. The Advanced Placement Program, sponsored by the College Board, Princeton, New Jersey, provides courses in both studio art and art history at the high school level. These courses are generally geared to the advanced student in upper grades (11 and 12) also, and are designed to encourage college-level studies in secondary school. Advanced Placement (commonly referred to as AP) Art History attracts students from the academic sector of the school, as well as art students desirous of learning about art in a more cognitive way. AP Studio courses specifically appeal to the studio artist, and the objective is the development of a portfolio in either drawing, or general studio work. These courses provide outlets for the creative energies of the artistically gifted, and "can be used to supplement courses for the gifted in situations where cost has become a barrier to expansion of such programs."[48]

The initiation of the ARTS Program, the Presidential Scholar in the Arts, and Advanced Placement Courses in the history of art, and in studio work, are significant steps toward meeting the needs of the gifted student in art.

At this point, two modes of artistic development exemplified by the careers of Benjamin West and Thomas Eakins become relevant. Within the limits of the eighteenth century and the supportive family environment in which West was encouraged to develop his giftedness, a definite parallel exists today, nearly 240 years later. Despite the lack of professional direction early in his career, West ultimately arrived at the successful realization of his goal to become an artist. The cultivation of his giftedness was largely provided by his family, friends and the occasional encouragement of his educated friends in Philadelphia. Thomas Eakins, on the other hand, had advantages not available to West because of the advancement of the arts during the 100 years that separated them in time. Eakins' early years were spent under the careful scrutiny of his father, an engraver; drawing became a familiar activity, along with reading and writing. Unlike West, his "high school" education included structured courses in drawing, along with his studies in mathematics, science, foreign language, etc. Eakins' continuing education included very specific art experiences which lead to his eventual need for directed study under a mentor. Both artists were identified by their peers, teachers, and their performance, to be gifted in art. It is evident that these two artists would easily adapt to the art curriculum of the 1980's, making both positive and negative comparisons with their previous experiences. West might find his high school program much

broader in scope than that which he experienced in the eighteenth century; Eakins would most likely be critical of the number of required courses he must take, and the manner in which they are taught. Both men would be frustrated by the current status of the arts in contemporary education. Althcugh approximately 100 years separated West and Eakins, both believed that the pursuit of art was a noble venture. Both men would endorse the philosophy that the arts are basic to education, and they both would have agreed with Edward Larsh's remarks at the Aspen Conference:

> The spark of advancement begins with a curious mind; and, curiosity and the innate thirst for discovery found within humanity are creative processes, requiring gifts and talents, talents which need to be nurtured and supported whether they be ultimately utilized in the pursuit of science, religion, business, the arts, or any other human endeavor. And by improving the opportunities for the gifted, we not only enrich their lives, but our own, for often they are the ones who show us new dimensions of human spirit and thought.[49]

Much has been accomplished in recent years in an attempt to satisfy the needs of the artistically gifted student. The past, however, provides insights and directions that enlighten the present, and encourages better understanding of the subject being investigated. Gadamer asserts that "Understanding always includes application to the present."[50] The artistically gifted individual in the present educational environment is better understood when his counterpart in history is understood.

The historical reflections that follow shall attempt to reveal the manner in which two individuals became artists; each following the dictates of his interests yet are influenced by the social and educational demands of their period in history. It shall be seen that the past is indeed "contemporaneous"; it might also be seen that through our understanding of the past we are better equipped to meet the needs of the artistically gifted today. Gadamer establishes the proper view of the

past that is relevant to this investigation:

> . . . the past is not like a pile of facts which can be made an object of consciousness, but rather is a stream in which we move and participate, in every act of understanding. Tradition . . . is not over against us but something in which we stand and through which we exist.[51]

Chapter II

NOTES

[1]Public Law 91-230, Section 806. U. S. Government Printing Office. Washington, D.C. 1972. Transmittal letter by U. S. Commissioner of Education, S. P. Marland. (Marland Report).

[2]Ibid, Appendix A, p. 2.

[3]Paul E. Torrance. Guiding Creative Talent. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1962. p. 6.

[4]Ibid, p. 143.

[5]Abraham H. Maslow. Farther Reaches of Human Nature, New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1971. p. 172.

[6]Marland Report, Appendix A, p. 2.

[7]Someone's Priority: The Issues and Recommendations on the State of the Arts and Gifted in America. The Colorado Department of Education. Education 79-1686 1M. July 1979.

[8]Ibid, p. 2.

[9]Ibid, p. 2.

[10]Ibid, p. 3.

[11]Ibid, p. 16.

[12]Ibid, p. 16.

[13]Ibid, p. 17.

[14]Ibid, p. 16.

[15]Ibid, pp. 21-22.

[16]Ibid, p. 16.

[17]Ibid, p. 23.

[18]Ibid, p. 18.

[19]Arts Education and Back to Basics. Stephen M. Dobbs, Editor. National Art Education Association. Reston, VA.: 1979. p. 31.

[20]Someone's Priority, p. 18.

[21]Ibid, p. 19.

[22]Ibid, p. 19.

[23]Ibid, p. 20.

[24]Ibid, p. 20.

[25]Ibid, p. 21.

[26]Ibid, p. 21.

[27]James J. Gallagher. Teaching the Gifted Child. Boston, MA.: Allyn and Bacon, Inc. 1975. p. 338.

[28]Ibid, p. 233.

[29]Ibid, p. 233.

[30]Ibid, p. 233.

[31]Ibid, p. 233.

[32]Maslow, p. 96.

[33]Gallagher, p. 264.

[34]Ibid, p. 239.

[35]Ibid, p. 244.

[36]Ibid, p. 239.

[37]Ibid, p. 264.

[38]Maslow, p. 174.

[39]Gallagher, p. 253.

[40]Maslow, p. 101.

[41]Ibid, p. 181.

[42]Ibid, p. 173.

[43]Someone's Priority, p. 27.

[44]Ibid, p. 22.

[45]Ibid, p. 22.

[46]ETS 1981 Annual Report. Clyde Leib, Editor. ETS Information Division. Princeton, N.J.: 1981. p. 5.

[47]Ibid, p. 5.

[48]Ibid, p. 7.

[49]Someone's Priority, p. 29

[50]Palmer, p. 191.

[51]Hans-Georg Gadamer. Philosophical Hermeneutics. Berkley: University of California Press, 1977. p. xxv.

CHAPTER III

BENJAMIN WEST

ARTISTIC GIFTEDNESS AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

A number of artists might have been chosen as example of "how artists become artists" for use in this investigation. The life of Benjamin West has been selected for examination of his artistic development for two reasons. First, by selecting a period in time quite distant from contemporary, twentieth-century culture and its educational philosophies, sufficient similarities and contrasts might be examined which would provide a close look at how the self-trained artist emerges, regardless of time-frame. Sufficient historical anecdotes will reveal the nature of the environment in which West grew up in which his artistic ability was permitted to expand. Secondly, West was chosen for study because of the paradox which he presented later in life following the completion of his art training: although self-taught, West became the mentor for the majority of prominent early-American painters.

My research has uncovered a significant text which provides the basis for the historical comparison mentioned above, titled The Life and Studies of Benjamin West, Esq., written by John Galt and printed in the year 1816. The year or approximate time period in which this publication was printed is particularly significant since Benjamin West was still living and verified the narrative which Galt compiled, largely through West's reflections on the events of his life--in particular his early development as an artist. The complete works on West consists of two volumes written by Galt: Part I concerns the formative years in the development of West as a young, developing artist, his pursuit of painting

as a life's work, and his resulting study of painting in Italy. The first volume concludes with West making a brief study of French painting en route from Italy to England, in the year 1763. Volume II involves the years following the arrival of West in England, his work as a mature, prominent painter of history, his eventual appointment as President of the Royal Academy of London, and the establishment of the "American School."

The question of how gifted individuals become artists might now be considered with regard to Benjamin West and life in mid-eighteenth century America. Although the most prevalent contemporary mode of artistic development generally involves a mentor, or various mentors, due to the life circumstances in which West found himself, this was not a possiblity--eighteenth century life in Pennsylvania was far from conducive to artistic development according to Galt.[1] Instead, West was left to the resources available to him, largely that of his own creative, intellectual ability and his immediate environment. Despite his being born into a Quaker family, which normally takes a dim view of the arts in everyday life, West found his environment conducive to artistic development and received ready praise and encouragement from his family. The importance of the environment to artistic development is, notwithstanding, the most vital element to be considered here. Had West received discouraging remarks, reprimands, or perhaps some form of punishment when he began his exploration of drawing at the age of seven, most likely his future would have taken a very different turn. "It was the policy of the Quakers to make mankind wiser and better; and they thought that, as the passions are the springs of all moral evil when in a state of excitement,

whatever tends to awaken them is unfavourable . . .,"[2] Galt states. It is fortunate indeed that young West found his immediate surroundings tolerant of his unusual interests, despite the constraints which the community of Quakers set upon him.

The course followed by West was one of continued support of his many intellectual and artistic inquiries. Occasional impetus was given to his artistic development by family acquaintances in nearby Philadelphia and Lancaster. They acknowledged his unique gift by supplying him with art materials and engraved reproductions of works of art from the major cities of Europe. Galt provides an account of the environment which surrounded West during these early years:

> The society of Lancaster . . . though it could not boast of any very distinguished character, yet comprehended many individuals who were capable of appreciating the merit of essays in art, and of discriminating the rude efforts of real genius from the more complete productions of mere mechanical skill. It was exactly in such a place that such a youth as Benjamin West was likely to meet with that flattering attention which is the best stimulus of juvenile talent.[3]

It can be seen that Benjamin West received adequate encouragement in the pursuit of his talent and that his immediate world was a good environment in which to develop. It must also be emphasized, however, that regardless of these very desirable conditions, he received virtually no specific direction or instruction in drawing or painting--not only as a young artist, but as a mature student abroad several years hence. Early inquiries into the art of drawing were simple explorations of parts of his surroundings--family members, birds, trees, etc.

From these beginnings he progressed to reproducing images from engravings given to him by friends of the family. Gradually, he began

to combine portions of various engravings to create original compositions of his own. The gift of a box of paints put him on the path of rendering some of his early compositions in color. This early subject matter laid a logical foundation for his later interpretations of historical and biblical events.

It is noteworthy here to point out that although West grew to realize prominence as a painter, his first efforts were without precedence in this country. There were certainly no museums, schools of art or prominent teachers of art who might prompt his beginnings. Galt looks upon the event of his first drawing somewhat melodramatically as the "birth of fine arts in the New World."[4] Whether fact or fancy, the question must be asked, "What prompted a child of seven to draw when 'drawing' as such was unknown to the child?" The circumstances which surrounded the event were not unusual, according to Galt. The young child was moved by seeing an infant smile in her sleep and impulsively grabbed paper and pens on a nearby desk and drew her portrait.[5] Although written in a somewhat dramatic style, Galt recorded the episode as being significant because it was "one of the few instances in the history of art in which the first inspiration of genius can be distinctly traced to a particular circumstance."[6]

The importance of this event in relation to the development of this investigation centers on the term "genius." Although this word is tossed about somewhat carelessly in contemporary usage, for the purposes of this investigation the word "gifted" becomes a synonym. Care must be taken to establish that a proper understanding of "gifted" or "giftedness" be comprehended here. It is not meant to establish that genius or giftedness

is rare or infrequent, but rather that this category of individual might possess special gifts or abilities which are not shared by the majority of individuals. Had it been possible to administer the Stanford-Binet, Wechsler, or other test of intelligence to Benjamin West as a screening device to determine giftedness, he might fall into the test range of 140 intelligence quotient or higher. It is this range of performance that the interchangeable terms "genius" or "gifted" are applied for the purposes of this investigation.

Further pursuit of these elusive terms reveals insight which might provide sufficient understanding of the relationship that exists between the eighteenth century use of "genius" and the twentieth century term "gifted." Galt aptly states:

> It will often appear, upon a careful study of authentic biography, that the means of giving body and effect to their conceptions, are rarely withheld from men of genius. If the circumstances of Fortune are unfavourable, Nature instructs them to draw assistance immediately from herself, by endowing them with the faculty of perceiving a fitness and correspondence in things which no force of reasoning, founded on the experience of others, could enable them to discover. This aptness is, perhaps, the surest indication of the possession of original talent. There are minds of a high class to which the world ascribes genius, but which possess only a superior capacity for the application of other men's notions, unconnected with any unusual portion of the inventive faculty.[7]

Analysis of this insightful account of the innate qualities of genius provides a wealth of phrases which echo current qualities ascribed to individuals in this category. The "means of giving body and effect to their conceptions" suggests a facility for expressing or communicating ideas or concepts which is common as a characteristic of giftedness, since Galt provides verification when he says that these means are "rarely withheld from men of genius." Comparisons with current characteristics of the gifted reveals the contemporaneousness of Galt's remarks, as later

definitions will illustrate. "If the circumstances of Fortune are unfavourable" alludes to the difficulties experienced by any individual who confronts a problem to solve. When such a problem is encountered by "men of genius," however, Galt graces such individuals with extra abilities which are responsible for "endowing them with the facility of perceiving a fitness and correspondence in things which no force of reasoning founded on the experience of others, could enable them to discover." The "faculty of perceiving" denotes another quality ascribed to gifted individuals, that of a keen sense of perception which is visually manifested among the artistically gifted. "This aptness is . . . the surest indication of the possession of original talent" clearly speaks for itself. Of significance in this sentence, however, are the terms aptness and original talent which especially addresses those gifted in the arts.

The concluding portion of Galt's explication of "genius" makes a distinction between the academically talented individual and those who are specifically artistically gifted. The "minds of a high class . . . to which the world often ascribes genius" is a profound remark which bears supreme relevance to contemporary society as well, especially with reference to the imbalance of cognitive learning in current educational curricula. Minds "which possess only a superior capacity for the application of other men's notions" expresses this condition as well today as when it was originally written. Finally, "the inventive faculty" Galt refers to is most clearly the creative dimension attributed to individuals who possess special abilities, whether cognitively or artistically oriented. Taken collectively, the message to be found in this interpretation of Galt's description of the nature of "genius" speaks not only to

the audience of his time, but very specifically to the educator of the 1980s who is concerned with the gifted student and his education.

Of specific relevance to the interpretaiton of the definition of "genius" by John Galt is the nature of its timelessness or contemporaneousness, which is characteristically hermeneutic in nature. The applicability of the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer to this definition by Galt is of significance.

> The creator of a work of art (or text) may intend the public of his time, but the real being of his work is what it is able to say, and this being reaches fundamentally beyond any historical confinement. In this sense, the work of art occupies a timeless present.[8]

Clearly, the words of Galt reach beyond the "historical confinement" of the early nineteenth century and gives meaning to individuals within the same tradition in the present and future. According to Gadamer, "hermeneutics is the art of clarifying mediating by our own effort of interpretation what is said by persons we encounter in tradition."[9] The interpretation of Galt's concept of "genius" was not meant to serve as an illustration of hermeneutics; the value of this interpretive mode to investigations of this nature is significant. Although the original function of hermeneutics was limited to the interpretation of biblical texts, it was gradually extended to include application to literary works which were "obscure or symbollic, requiring a special type of interpretation to get at its hidden meaning."[10]

A natural progression from the definition provided by John Galt would be, of course, another step forward toward the present wherein another text might provide an expansion of Galt's early remarks about "genius" or giftedness. What is desired here, however, is not a chronological development of thought about the nature of "giftedness," as this

word is truly a product of the Twentieth Century. What was initially sought was an adequate temporal distance against which to contrast and compare contemporary concerns for the gifted, specifically focusing on the artistically gifted individual. The Galt text provides more than was originally anticipated in this regard. It would be comparatively effortless to proceed from the year 1816 to the present with descriptive annotations about significant figures in art who demonstrate the qualities cited by Galt, but I suspect that has been done competently by others before me. What is desirable as an alternative to this approach centers on comparisons and contrasts to be found between giftedness of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. What are their commonalities? Are there significant contrasts? Decidedly a more interesting task.

Let us further examine the artistic unfolding of Benjamin West, the subject of this Chapter. As he approached adolescence, his father became concerned about what his son might do with his life, a timeless concern for a father. Brief encounters with educated acquaintances further reinforced the significance of his son's gift in painting, which raised a serious question of the suitability of this profession for the son of a Quaker. The education of his son had fostered and encouraged the pursuit of what seemed to be a natural inclination. Any artistic or creative accomplishment was rewarded with praise, and as young West grew more proficient the greater the complexity of the achievement and the broader the resulting range of recognition and praise. Thus, as a young man, Benjamin West had reached a point of artistic proficiency unequalled not only in his community, but within the greater community which was then the total knowledge of anyone associated with the arts in the new world.

When West reached his sixteenth year his father "became anxious to see him settled in some established business."[11] Although he was reluctant to discourage the further development of his son's gift for painting, he was also concerned with the practicality of a career in painting. As a religious man and a respected Quaker, he turned to his neighbors for advice whereupon a meeting of the Society of Friends was called to consider the destiny of his son. Following much discussion on the subject, an address was delivered by John Williamson, a member of the community who was respected for the purity and integrity of his life. He apparently consulted frequently, owing to his "natural wisdom, and, as a public Preacher among the Friends, possessed an astonishing gift of convincing eloquence."[12] Williamson addressed the meeting as follows:

> They have had . . . ten children, whom they have carefully brought up in fear of God, and in the Christian religion; and the youth, whose lot in life we are now convened to consider, is Benjamin, their youngest child. It is known to you all that God is pleased, from time to time, to bestow upon some men extraordinary gifts of mind, and you need not be told by how wonderful an inspiration their son has been led to cultivate the art of painting. It is true that our tenets deny the utility of that art to mankind. But God has bestowed on the youth a genius for the art, and can we believe that Omniscience bestows His gifts but for great purpose? What God has given, who shall dare to throw away? Let us not estimate Almighty wisdom by our notions; let us not presume to arraign His judgment by our ignorance, but in the evident propensity of the young man, be assured that we see an impulse of the Divine Hand operating towards some high beneficient end.[13]

Such a persuasive speech convinced the Community and West's father that the young artist should continue his pre-destined path. It was further requested that a private meeting of the Friends be held at the West residence at which time Benjamin would receive the blessings of the Society. The same John Williamson who gave the aforementioned speech

delivered a rather lengthy endorsement of young West's future career in painting which follows in its entirety. He began his address by observing that it was commonly held as indisputable that things of an ornamental nature were not necessary to the well-being of man, and that all things of a superfluous nature should be excluded from the usages and manners of the Society.[14] Williamson proclaims:

> In this proscription, we have included . . . the study of the fine arts, for we see them applied only to embellish pleasures, and to strengthen our inducements to gratify the senses at the expense of our immortal claims. But, because we have seen painting put to this derogatory use, and have, in consequence, prohibited the cultivation of it among us, are we sure that it is not one of those gracious gifts which God has bestowed on the world, not to add to the sensual pleasures of man, but to facilitate his improvement as a social and a moral being? The fine arts are called the offspring and the emblems of peace. The Christian religion itself is the doctrine of good will to man. Can those things which only prosper in peace be contrary to the Christian religion? But, it is said, that the fine arts soften and emasculate the mind. In what way? Is it by withdrawing those who study them from the robust exercises which enable nations and people to make was with success? Is it by lessening the dispositon of mankind to destroy one another, and by taming the audacity of their animal fierceness? Is it for such a reason as this, that we who profess to live in unison and friendship, not only among ourselves, but with all the world--that we should object to the cultivation of the fine arts, of those arts which disarm the natural ferocity of man? We may as well be told that the doctrine of peace and life ought to be proscribed in the world because it is pernicious to the practice of war and slaughter, as that the arts which call on man to exercise his intellectual powers more than his physical strength, can be contrary to Christianity, and adverse to the benevolence of the Deity. I speak not, however, of the fine arts as the means of amusement, nor the study of them as pasttime to fill up the vacant hours of business, though even as such, the taste for them deserves to be regarded as a manifestation of Divine favour, in as much as they dispose the heart to kind and gentle inclinations. For, I think them ordained by God for some great and holy purpose. Do we not know that the professors of the fine arts are commonly men greatly distinguished by special gifts of a creative and discerning spirit? If there be anything in the usual course of human affairs which exhibits the immediate interdisposition of the Deity, it is in the progress of the fine arts, in which it would appear he often raises up those great characters, the spirit of whose imaginations have an interminable influence on posterity, and who are themselves separated and elevated among the generality of mankind, by the name of men of genius. Can we believe that all

> this is not for some useful purpose? What that purpose is, ought we to pretend to investigate? Let us rather reflect that the Almight God has been pleased among us, and in this remote wilderness, to endow, with the rich gifts of a peculiar spirit, that youth who has now our common consent to cultivate his talents for an arts, which, according to our humble and human judgment, was previously thought an unnecessary ministration to the sensual propensities of our nature. May it be demonstrated by the life and works of the Artist, that the gift of God has not been bestowed on him in vain, nor the motives of the beneficient inspiration which induces us to suspend our particular tenets, prove barren of religious or moral effect. On the contrary, let us confidently hope that this occurrence has been for good, and that the consequences which may arise in the society of this new world, from the example which Benjamin West will be enabled to give, will be such a love of the arts of peace as shall tend to draw the ties of affection closer, and diffuse over a wider extent of community the interests and blessings of fraternal love.[15]

Upon the conclusion of the address by Williamson, young West received the enthusiastic blessings of the men and women in the congregation. The impact of the speech was felt by all that were present, and eliminated any shadow of doubt concerning young West's pursuit of the fine arts. Had he felt no responsibility to God for the development of his gifts prior to the address by Williamson, West must certainly have strengthened his committment to that responsibility afterward.

The events which followed were of little consequence concerning the further development of his talent, other than a periodic request for a painting--generally a copy of an engraving. In the year 1756, at the age of eighteen, he departed for Philadelphia to live and study with a relative of his family. Provost Smith, an earlier acquaintance, was responsible for furthering his education and providing the necessary introductions to individuals seeking a portrait, an art for which West was rapidly developing a reputation. He enjoyed his activity as a portrait artist for nearly two years, putting his earnings into savings for a visit to Europe

where he might study the works of the masters whose compositions he had seen only in engravings.

To further his reputation as a portrait artist in America, and to serve as the point of departure for Europe, West moved to New York in 1759. He was able to charge higher prices for his works in New York due to a more affluent, mercantile class and due also to the reputation which he had earned in Philadelphia. In addition to relative prosperity, West experienced the study of occasional European paintings which motivated imitations of style and composition in subsequent works. Periodically an original composition resulted from inspiration received by studying a particular engraving.

The details which surrounded his eventual departure for Europe are somewhat commonplace, not totally unlike any other individual preparing for a sea voyage. It is sufficient to say that he departed for Europe in 1760 filled with enthusiasm for his much-anticipated trip abroad. Following a rather uneventful passage, West arrived in England where he promptly engaged the services of a courier to escort him to Rome, his ultimate destination. His arrival in Rome was the realization of a dream which began in his early youth when he was told that the original paintings from which the many engravings he copied were made, could one day be seen in Italy. He wasted no time in introducing himself to Roman society via letters of introduction written for him by Dr. Smith in Philadelphia, and in beginning his study of the art treasures he travelled so far to see.

This brief account of the incidents which transpired following West's leaving Philadelphia brings us to an important point in the

development of his life as an artist. Having laid adequate foundation in the areas of drawing and painting, largely through copying, he was able to engage in the task of copying from the great abundance of masterworks to be found in eighteenth century Italy. Raphael Mengs, the most noted artist of the day to be working in Italy, met West at a social event and offered advice regarding the best course of study to be followed. Having already spent several weeks in Rome becoming acquainted with various art treasures, it was Mengs suggestion that West go to Florence and view the many collections of paintings, after which he must go to Bologna to study the works of Carracci. Parma should be the next stop on his tour where he could see works by Corregio; and finally, he must go to Venice and view the works of Tintoretto, Titian and Veronese. This prescription was in total accord with West's desire to work from the well-known masterworks, so he set out on the journey with much enthusiasm. A large portion of the time spent in various cities was devoted to studying specific paintings which Mengs felt to be of most value to West; very little attention was given to the imitation of the compositions of these paintings, although considerable energy was spent on understanding the painting technique of Titian. West executed a number of works in Venice in an attempt to better comprehend the manner in which Titian applied his paint to achieve the richness of color which is attributed to this master. Having completed his tour of the various cities in Italy, and having sufficiently absorbed the flavor of the art works he studied, West returned to Rome. Before considering his education complete, however, attention was given to making extensive studies of the wealth of antique sculpture and costumes to be found in Rome.

Drawings of Greek, Roman and Egyptian costumes were to provide West with a broad itinerary from which he could create compositions at some future point in time. The last phase of study prescribed by Mengs was to complete a major painting which would illustrate his understanding of what he had learned from the Italian masters. West executed two works which he felt might have been done in a style similar to the painters whose work he had studied. The following two works were scenes which he interpreted from literature: Cimon and Iphigenia; and Angelica and Medoro. These works were readily accepted as his masterpieces--the task which traditionally illustrated an artist's mastery of a particular medium. Mengs and the aristocracy of Rome regarded West as a great painter.

It is significant here to expand upon the long-range influences which West experienced in Italy. Raphael Mengs was the ideal painter to guide the emerging style which Benjamin West was to become famous for in the near future. Mengs was only ten years younger than West and had a similar background, thus making their relationship an easy one to establish. Although their personal philosophies of painting were vastly different--Mengs leaned heavily toward the baroque and rococo for compositional direction, and West had his feet firmly planted in imitations of nature--they shared a mutual endorsement of the philosophy which had recently been set forth by Johann Joachim Winckelmann. As curator of Cardinal Albani's collection of Greek and Roman sculpture, and at the time of West's arrival in Rome he was writing his History of Ancient Art, Winckelmann did much to initiate the neo-classical style that was soon to sweep Europe. West enjoyed the writings of Winckelmann, finding strong

relationships among their commonly-shared view to the past for the development of a new style in painting. A rising economic class looked upon the art of the royal courts as shallow and decadent and applauded the "return to moral painting" being espoused by Winckelmann.

> It remained for Winckelmann to crystallize a bourgeois style by turning painters back upon an exact study of the antique. His approach was inspired and made possible by the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum carried out during the twenty years before West reached Italy. Classical archaeology was being born, and its findings disseminated by engravings like those of Piranesi, filled imaginations all over Europe with accurate data on antiquity. These data, Winckelmann insisted, must form the basis of all future great art, and his voice was listened to gladly. . . .[16]

The foundation was being laid for future studio practices which was to last for at least the next one hundred years. It was Winckelmann's argument that artists much not draw from "living human bodies that had been corrupted by the rule of the aristocracy."[17] He proposed that " . . . artists should reproduce antique statues exactly, since the Greeks had been ideal men uncorrupted by evil governments."[18] It was his view that the only worthy subjects for the painter were to be found in the heroic legends of antiquity and their accompanying moral message. Winckelmann felt that it was the artist's function to "make every picture a school of virtue." Benjamin West was a stalwart proponent of this philosophy. His childhood was spent drawing from nature and in illustrating Biblical events and characters, the latter taking on new significance concerning the emerging neo-classical style being espoused by Winckelmann. Unlike Mengs, who kept one foot in the baroque style, West was eager to follow the new path of "making every picture a school of virtue."

The three years spent in Rome had provided West with the education he had desired, and also established his reputation as a highly-respected painter. He had decided that his education was complete and became anxious to return to America and his family. A letter from his father, however, suggested that he visit England before returning home, which he was most happy to do. Thus, a very important chapter in West's life closes, and a major chapter is soon to begin. Following a brief sojourn in France, scrutinizing the works of art in Paris, West arrived in London in August 1763.

The cultural climate of England was significantly different from the aesthetic and intellectual richness West had left behind in Italy. "English art had for centuries been quiescent,"[19] claimes James Thomas Flexner in his book America's Old Masters. Due to the religious constraints placed on painting by the Protestant movement during the reign of Henry VIII, about all that survived for the painter was portraiture. The next two hundred years of painting was produced largely by imported artists such as Holbein, Van Dyck, Lely and Kneller. The demand for portraiture by members of the court kept the foreign artists very busy, while English painters were denied commissions because of their comparatively unsophisticated painting skills. "The progression of these foreign masters was downward,"[20] according to Flexner. When Kneller died in 1753, he "left England without a foreign artist capable of monopolizing the business, but also without a vital tradition on which the native artists could build."[21]

Three years before West arrived in England, a small group of artists had the courage to establish the Society of Artists, and exhibited their

first show of paintings. It was a great success due to the increasing interest in art on the part of the mercantile class in London. Unlike the connoisseurs, Londoners were not indifferent to their artists or the paintings they were producing. The art scene in 1763, the year West arrived in England, included such artists as William Hogarth, Joshuah Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough. A new, fresher portrait style had emerged, and West was timely with his appearance in England at exactly the moment when his newly-acquired expertise might be most appreciated. He soon became involved with Reynolds, Romney and Gainsborough and through their encouragement submitted the two classical works which he had painted in Italy to the Society of Artists exhibition of 1764. Due to the enthusiastic response to his work, he decided to settle in England rather than return to America.

West began his lengthy stay in England as a portrait artist, receiving enough commissions to support himself and his newly-acquired wife--his American fiancee whom he sent for once established in London. He grew tired of portraiture, however, as he considered it little more than hackwork. "He wanted to paint the stories of antiquity in a manner that would teach virture,"[22] says Flexner. Despite the centuries of prejudice that preceded him, West soon found patrons among the prelates of the Church of England. An important commission for the Archbishop of York, Agrippina with the Ashes of Germanicus quickly established West's reputation as a painter of history and, more importantly, introduced neo-classicism to his contemporaries in England. He continued the development of his style of painting along the lines set down by Winckelmann, utilizing Graeco-Roman models which he had studied in Rome. Neo-classicism was quickly accepted in England, as well as in France,

providing West with many admiring followers. His work came to the attention of George III, the reigning monarch of England, thus bringing together two major influences on the perpetuation of the neo-classical style--both men held virtue higher than any other human quality. Together, West and George III planned various paintings which would be executed in future months. "Thus began the friendship that was to be one of the closest in history between a monarch and a painter,"[23] claims Flexner. Royal commissions followed one another more quickly than West could execute them which seemed to assure him a future as the history painter he desired to become.

A result of the strong friendship that existed between West and the King was the founding of the Royal Academy, which had its beginnings in 1768 and of which West would eventually become President. His influence, both as court painter and friend of the King, was instrumental in elevating the stature of English art to a position of rivaling, if not leading, any other country in the world. It is significant that an American painter, educated in Italy, should lead the painters of England to the height of reputation never before experienced in their country's history.

A major leap forward for West came with his eventual boredom in representing historic figures in the expected Greek or Roman costumes, despite the fact that he was the chief proponent of the neo-classic style. In 1771 he decided to paint the death of General Wolfe, not in Roman costumes but in the red uniforms which are generally associated with British soldiers. Although the King and the Archbishop pleaded with him to follow his usual treatment of historic subjects, West insisted

that General Wolfe was a contemporary figure and as such should be painted in contemporary costume. West said:

> The event to be commemorated . . . took place on the thirteenth of September, 1759, in a region of the world unknown to the Greeks and Romans, and at a period of time when no such nations, nor heroes in their costumes, any longer existed. . . . The same truth that guides the pen of the historian should govern the pencil of the painter . . . I want to mark the date, the place, and the parties engaged in the event.[24]

Despite the risk taken, the Death of General Wolfe was received with enthusiastic response from the public. West immediately executed another subject, William Penn's Treaty with the Indians, and again painted the figures in costumes of the period. These two works are heralded as masterpieces by modern art historians, due not only to his mastery of painting technique, but also to the emotional quality that was expressed in his handling of the subjects. It should be remembered that as a child West painted solely from nature, and only what his eye could see. The inventions of costume, architecture and idealistic human forms which comprise his neo-classical paintings, could be laid aside when he decided to work from nature as he once had years before. It is regrettable that West's interest in depicting American history was quickly curtailed with the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. As an American painter to the British court, his position was awkward to say the least. The King persuaded him to turn to religious painting until the friction between the two countries was resolved, and initiated a commission of thirty-five large murals showing the progress of religion for a chapel at Windsor Castle. The years that followed saw an outpouring of over a hundred paintings of Biblical subjects, stopping periodically to paint an event from contemporary English or American history.

Another side of Benjamin West, and to many historians his most important side, was his function as the teacher of the majority of America's emerging young artists. "West was perhaps most important to the history of art as a teacher,"[25] says Flexner. He continues by saying that "Since almost every distinguished American artist of the next generation studied in his studio, he was incontrovertibly the father of American painting."[26] Among the many painters which West directed, instructed or assisted in his "American School" in London were Copley, Stuart, Charles Willson Peale, Rembrandt Peale, Pratt, Trumbull, Allston, Morse, Malbone, Leslie, Earle, Dunlap and Sully. Although most of his energy as a teacher was centered on American artists, many important English painters were instructed by West as well. It should be known that like the French Academy, the Royal Academy taught only drawing. Owing to his reputation as a painter, West was a popular teacher, he never judged his students by their social status or their ability to pay for his services. He is known to have supported many of his students either through gifts of money or through housing them during their period of instruction. The objectivity with which West approached the instruction of his students made him an ideal teacher. Flexner says:

> The fact that he painted more by reason than by emotion made West a good teacher, for it enabled him to explain the exact purpose of every brush-stroke. In talking to his students, he insisted on the importance of observing nature. . . .[27]

So insistent was he on the importance of observing nature that he once had the body of a hanged man rushed from the gallows and nailed to a cross to provide his students with a plaster cast that would show exactly what a crucifixion might look like.[28]

West was respected not only for his painting expertise, and a keen respect for common sense, but he was also admired for his ability to appreciate the creative efforts of his students. "One of West's greatest gifts as a teacher was his ability to appreciate unconventional genius,"[29] claims Flexner. He greatly praised and admired the works of Willaim Blake and J. M. W. Turner. Flexner felt that:

> The powerful academician did not try to force his pupils into any mold, but helped them to develop in the directions they themselves wished to go.[30]

A typical comment West made to his students when confronted with what to do in their paintings was "Try it, and if it is not good you can alter it."[31] There are many accounts which attend to the special qualities assigned to West and his role as teacher or mentor for his students. His tireless energy and daily practice of spending long hours in the studio afforded his students many opportunities for assistance in their work.

Among West's personal qualities or attributes, whether to be admired or admonished, was his feelings about his own greatness. "There is no end to the anecdotes showing his exalted opinion of his own work,"[32] says Flexner. West's boasting was not aggressive in nature, however; he regarded his greatness as a simple statement of fact. He further believed that:

> . . . since the object of art was to further virtue, beautiful pictures could be painted only by a man who was himself virtuous; he would have been unfaithful to his dream of himself as a supreme genius if he had stooped to petty deeds. And, of course, his saintliness . . . did as much as the quality of his paintings to raise him to that secure pinnacle that made his saintliness possible.[33]

West was so impressed with his own greatness that he felt it was his duty to found schools of art in America as well as in England. He

envisioned the cities of New York and Philadelphia as the Athens and Corinth of the western world.[34] He felt that within only a few years these two cities would take the lead and become the "next great school of art."[35] West viewed his students as an extension of his own greatness and did all in his power to assist them; the perpetuation of his own style of painting would be carried back to America via the many young painters he taught.

The climax to an already impressive career was the election of West as president of the Royal Academy in 1792. As one of the four artists who helped found this royally-sanctioned group, and having gained considerable respect and admiration among his peers, it is not surprising that he held this position, except for one year, until his death in 1820. His last years were spent in continued production of both historic and religious paintings, spending long hours in the studio until the day of his death. His death was considered a "national calamity, being mourned by peers, bishops, statesmen and commoner,"[36] and he was buried in St. Paul's cathedral next to Sir Joshua Reynolds.

This concludes an account of the life and education of an artist whose path was self-determined. In contrast with this mode of learning shall be seen the more popular avenue of artistic development involving a specific curriculum and the influence of a mentor. A form of irony is presented in the case of Benjamin West, that although he did not experience this influence in his own education, he become the dominant influence for so many of America's artists.

Chapter III

NOTES

[1]John Galt. The Life and Studies of Benjamin West, Esq. London, England. Nichols, Son, and Bentley. 1816. p. 16.

[2]Ibid, p. 16.

[3]Ibid, p. 34.

[4]Ibid, p. 11.

[5]Ibid, p. 10.

[6]Ibid, p. 11.

[7]Ibid, p. 20.

[8]Hans-Georg Gadamer. Philosophical Hermeneutics. Translated and Edited by David E. Linge, Berkley, C.A.: University of California Press, 1977, p. 96.

[9]Ibid, p. 96.

[10]Ibid, p. 35.

[11]Galt, p. 48.

[12]Ibid, p. 50.

[13]Ibid, p. 51.

[14]Ibid, p. 52.

[15]Ibid, pp. 52-56.

[16]James Thomas Flexner. America's Old Masters. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1980. p. 46.

[17]Ibid, p. 46.

[18]Ibid, p. 46.

[19]Ibid, p. 50.

[20]Ibid, p. 51.

[21]Ibid, p. 51.

[22]Ibid, p. 57.

[23]Ibid, p. 61.

[24]Ibid, p. 55.

[25]Ibid, p. 74.

[26]Ibid, p. 74.

[27]Ibid, p. 74.

[28]Ibid, p. 75.

[29]Ibid, p. 75.

[30]Ibid, p. 75.

[31]Ibid, p. 75.

[32]Ibid, p. 76.

[33]Ibid, p. 77.

[34]Ibid, p. 77.

[35]Ibid, p. 77.

[36]Ibid, p. 97.

CHAPTER IV

THOMAS EAKINS

THE ROLE OF MENTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTIC GIFTEDNESS

The path taken by the majority of individuals in the development of artistic talent lies in a very different direction than that taken by Benjamin West. History is filled with accounts of the relationships between young artists, or apprentices, and their masters (or mentors) providing details of their beginning experiences in the studio. Many years of training generally followed in which the young artist learned every aspect of drawing and painting to the satisfaction of the master artist; from grinding and mixing pigments to the most rigorous exercises in drawing and composition. At a point very distant from the early beginning experiences, the master provided the young artist with opportunities to demonstrate his learned expertise. Following his extensive training, and only after the master painter had given his approval, the young artist was ready to begin his life as an artist.

This practice continued well into the eighteenth century, finally giving way to the changing demands of society; the "educated man" of the late eighteenth century gained knowledge of his civilization through literature, history, philosophy and the sciences. The young artist of this period was educated in this same manner, and generally began the pursuit of his formal art education only upon reaching adulthood. For the serious young artist, like Benjamin West, initial art experiences in

America were random and followed no specific direction; if one chose to become an artist, one must leave America and seek training in Europe.

The need for professional direction, and the resulting study abroad, produced many generations of artists whose emerging styles were developed along traditional European lines. The early nineteenth century artist followed this newly-established precedent by investing a period of months or years in European studios, learning the skills necessary for a career as an artist. Although major American cities like Philadelphia and New York had founded schools of art at the turn of the century, they offered no competition for the established academies in England, France and Italy. Further, of great importance to the serious young artist was the opportunity to view the great collections of art to be found in Europe, and to learn the techniques of the masters by studying their works firsthand.

The American artist of the mid-nineteenth century had greatly benefited from the experiences of these early pioneers. A significant difference between the European training received by Benjamin West, and that received by other artists of mid-century, was the emphasis placed upon studying in the private ateliers of the noted artists of the period, concurrent with drawing instruction at the Academy. (In England, there was the Royal Academy for young art students; in Paris, it was the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.) The resulting influence on the artist, under such close scrutiny, significantly regulated the caliber and style of the work produced. The selection of the artist and his future as an artist.

This chapter will center on the life of Thomas Eakins, nineteenth century American painter, and the specific path he pursued in the

development of his artistic talent. Attention will be given to his activity as an art student in Paris, his experiences under the influence of a specific mentor, and his later role as mentor to emerging young artists at the Philadelphia Academy of the Fine Arts. It shall be seen that Eakins' art education was very different from that of Benjamin West.

The childhood years of Thomas Eakins were rather uneventful; his early education was received from his father, who was an engraver, and included practice in reading, writing, and drawing. Upon his admission to grammar school his drawing skills were already quite advanced through the efforts and encouragement of his father. The fact that drawing was a required discipline throughout his grammar school years could perhaps explain his exceptional drawing skills as a mature artist. The primary function of the curriculum in grammar school was to prepare the student for the keen competition he would confront when applying for admission to high school. Eakins was readily admitted to Central High School in 1857 as one of the top students in his class.

Noteworthy among the courses taken by Eakins in high school was a drawing curriculum designed and taught by Rembrandt Peale, a member of the distinguished Peale family of artists. A series of five books comprised the course in drawing and covered mechanical illustrations as well as problems concerning perspective and the human form.[1] Eakins excelled not only in drawing, but in all areas of the curriculum, graduating fifth in his class in 1861.

Eakins began his long affiliation with the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts following his graduation from Central High School. He participated in drawing classes sponsored by the Philadelphia Sketch

Club, at the Academy, and at the Jefferson Medical College. He delighted in the anatomy classes taken at the College, so much so that at one point he considered becoming a physician. In general, however, the program at the Academy was insufficient to meet the needs of the aspiring artist in America. Although beginning classes provided an adequate foundation in drawing from plaster casts, "everything was calm, conventional--and dull,"[2] according to Gordon Hendricks who wrote The Life and Work of Thomas Eakins.

As it was already established procedure for an artist to further his education in Europe, Thomas Eakins duly departed for Paris. He initiated his study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, reputed to be the most famous art school in the world.[3] The Ecole was dominated by the conservative Academie des Beaux-Arts. This Academie also controlled the Ecole de Rome, the Salons, and the scholarships and prizes awarded to artists, as well as museum purchases and public commissions. The long history of rigid control the Academie held over artists had created a philosophy which persisted deep into the nineteenth century: "Control instruction and you will control style."[4]

The traditional program at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts stressed basic instruction in drawing prior to 1863; following this date, only drawing was taught.[5] Eakins found the curriculum to be very much like that which he had experienced at the Pennsylvania Academy; both schools required drawing from plaster casts of the human form, drawing from the live model, and lessons in anatomy and perspective. It was unanimously agreed in the nineteenth century that success as an artist required the "gradual mastery of the human form, considered to be the basis for mastering all

objects in the visual environment."[6] Eakins was very responsive to, and in complete accord with, this theory, and began his studies with diligence and enthusiasm.

Eakins entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts with a definite advantage, since he had mastered drawing from plaster casts at the Pennsylvania Academy. As a result, he moved quickly from beginning exercises in drawing from casts, to working from live models. He was advised to find a place in one of the approved ateliers to begin the study of painting simultaneously with his classes in drawing. He was familiar with the works of all the master painters in charge of the various ateliers in Paris, but his choice had been predetermined before coming to Paris. He selected Jean-Leon Gerome on the basis of their common interests, Gerome's mastery of painting technique and because he was famous. "In the second half of the nineteenth century, Gerome was one of the most famous artists in the world,"[7] claims Bruce Evans, author of Jean-Leon Gerome. Reproductions of Gerome's paintings were very familiar to Eakins as a young man in Philadelphia; to study with this famous painter was a very exciting prospect.[8]

Gerome was held in the highest regard by Eakins from the very beginning of their relationship. This is documented in Lloyd Goodrich's classic work Thomas Eakins, His Life and Work. Goodrich quotes Eakins:

> I will never forget the first day that Gerome criticized my work. His criticism seemed pretty rough, but after a moment's consideration, I was glad . . . I am delighted with Gerome. . . . He treats all alike, good and bad. What he wants is progress. Nothing escapes his attention.[9]

"Thus began an admiration which was to last all Eakins' life,"[10] says Goodrich.

The Academie curriculum in which Eakins was involved, consisted of drawing and painting from live models, composition in the form of sketches, copying of recognized works, and drawing and painting out of doors.[11] Since all of his art experiences to this point were in drawing, Eakins found painting to be an exciting new medium. He rented a private studio so that he could practice the fundamentals of painting independently, and progressed rapidly, according to Goodrich, because:

> . . . he was a fast learner, with great powers of concentration, so that when he finally began to paint he gained control of the medium in a comparatively short time, and his first pictures were to be remarkably mature . . . into these few years of intense application he packed the struggles of an ordinary lifetime.[12]

His efforts were encouraged by Gerome, Eakins felt, "because he knows I am trying to learn."[13] He was soon executing paintings from memory, a popular painting practice in the nineteenth century, as well as composing original works--both of these practices were typical of advanced painting students.

Eakins' personal philosophy of painting centered on direct observation of nature. According to Goodrich, "He concerned himself little with aesthetic matters."[14] He felt that the painter must be faithful to nature, "but nature seen and understood in the largest way--not slavishly copied but re-created."[15] In Eakins' own words in a letter to his father, his philosophy is clearly and strongly stated:

> The big artist does not sit down monkey-like and copy a coal-scuttle or an ugly old woman like some Dutch painters have done, nor a dung pile, but he keeps a sharp eye on Nature and steals her tools. He learns what she does with light, the big tool, and then color, then form, and appropriates them to his own use. Then he's got a canoe of his own smaller than Nature's, but big enough for every purpose. . . . With this canoe he can sail parallel to Nature's sailing. He will soon be sailing only where he wants to. . . . The big painter sees the marks that Nature's big boat made in the mud and he understands them and profits by them. . . . In a big

> picture you can see what o'clock it is, afternoon or morning, if it's hot or cold, winter or summer, and what kind of people are there, and what they are doing and why they are doing it. . . . If a man makes a hot day he makes it like a hot day he once saw or is seeing; if a sweet face, a face he once saw or which he imagines from old memories or parts of memories and his knowledge, and he combines and combines. . . .[16]

It would seem that with such a clearly-stated view toward nature and painting, Eakins would have little to do with the pretentions of classical painting. It is paradoxical that he should have had such admiration for the works of Gerome, whose paintings epitomized the concerns of the classical painter, and that this admiration persisted throughout his lifetime. Goodrich offers some insight in this regard:

> His [Eakins] artistic curiosity extended only to works which, by successfully solving the problems that troubled him, had something definite to teach him; and his comments on them were limited almost entirely to their technique. When he called a picture 'beautiful' he meant that it was a fine piece of naturalistic painting.[17]

Eakins was strongly entrenched in the Academie camp of painters. His training at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts had firmly and securely implanted a personal demand for technical excellence and the highest regard for working directly from nature. He felt that the works of Gerome epitomized these concerns, and that although he painted classical themes and subjects, his interpretations were grounded in nature and not in affectation.[18] Eakins detested the pretention of the popular painters of the French Court whose paintings were "icily perfect machines, with their adroit combination of sentiment and nudity."[19] Although French and American societies purchased these works in great numbers, Eakins held them in very low regard. He wrote in a letter:

> I send by mail a catalogue of the Exhibition of Fine Arts. The great painters don't care to exhibit there at all; about twenty

> pictures in the whole lot interest me. The rest of the pictures are of naked women, standing, sitting, lying down, flying dancing, doing nothing, which they call Phrynes, Venuses, nymphs, hermaphrodites, houris, and Greek proper names. . . . When a man paints a naked woman he gives her less than poor Nature did. I can conceive of few circumstances wherein I would have to paint a woman naked, but if I did I would not mutilate her for double the money. . . . She is the most beautiful thing there is . . . I hate affectation.[20]

It is also surprising that despite his adherence to the natural world and his environs as painting subjects, Eakins chose to remain uninfluenced by what was happening all around him. Paris in the 1860's was a period of transition; the romantic movement had subsided and the Impressionists had not yet emerged--although they were in evidence both through their work and as topics of discussion in cafe society. Eakins was thoroughly absorbed in his own development as a painter, and cared little for what was happening outside his own world of Academic art. Goodrich feels that even if Eakins had seen the works of the Impressionists "it is doubtful whether he would have cared for their work . . . for his temperament was opposed to the more advanced tendencies of French Art."[21]

The direction which Eakins established for himself was one of firm committment to the standards and principles of the idealistic painter. He said, " . . . everything I see around me narrows my path and makes me more earnest and hardworking . . . worthy painting is the only hope of my life and study."[23] His daily routine revolved around his painting and his interactions with Gerome, gradually building his self-confidence as a competent, well-disciplined painter. He said in a letter:

> My hard work is telling on me and my studies are good. Since I am learning to work clean and bright and understand some of the niceties of color, my anatomy studies and sculpture, especially the anatomy, comes to bear on my work and I construct my men more solid and springy and strong. . . . There is no doubt of the

> necessity of long studio work and that is the hardest of all work . . . I can construct the human figure now as well as any of Gerome's boys. . . .[23]

In a letter to his father in the autumn of 1869, Eakins said that he felt his school days were at an end and that he would return to America soon; he had accomplished what he had gone to France to do, and was among Gerome's strongest student.[24] He decided that he had advanced to the point where there was little reason to remain in Paris, and that it might be detrimental if he were to remain in school any longer. He said:

> The French boys sometimes do, and learn to make wonderful fine studies, but I notice those who make such studies seldom make good pictures, for to make these wonderful studies they must make it their special trade, almost must stop learning, and pay all their attention to what they are putting on their canvas rather than in their heads. . . .[25]

Eakins viewed his experiences in Paris as significant to his future as a painter, and believed that he could not have made such progress if he had remained in America. His respect for the teaching of Gerome is echoed in an excerpt from one of his letters:

> A teacher can do very little for a pupil and should only be thankful if he don't hinder him, and the greater the master, mostly the less he can say.[26]

He also remarked, "I have had the benefit of a good teacher with good classmates. Gerome is too great to impose much. . . ."[27] Eakins' strength and independence as a painter is grounded in the freedom with which Gerome gently guided his emerging style, offering the technical direction necessary for his painting but leaving the aesthetic decision-making to him.

Although he felt his school days were over, Eakins also felt that he had much to learn before he could assume his professional role as a

painter. He concluded that he needed experience working out-of-doors in natural light, since most of his painting experience to date had taken place in the studio and limited his perceptions of color and light. Since winter was approaching, Eakins decided that the warmth and light of southern Spain would provide these essential conditions of light, and would also provide him with a much needed rest following his three years of intensive work in Paris.

Spain proved to be much more than Eakins had bargained for. He was greatly impressed with the light, which he had anticipated; what he did not foresee was the tremendous impact that Spanish art would have upon him and his painting. "Oh, what a satisfaction it gave me to see the good Spanish work, so good, so strong, so reasonable, so free from every affectation. In Madrid I have seen the big work every day and I will never forget it," he said.[28]

Eakins found the contrast between the artificiality of the French Salons and the vitality of Spanish art to be refreshing and exhilarating. Goodrich felt that the art of the Spaniard was the closest in temperament to Eakins because of its naturalism, its concern with the facts of everyday life, its expression of character more than ideal beauty, and its scientific objectivity.[29] The art of Velasquez was particularly suited to Eakins' emerging style, and provided the stimulus he needed to paint the world as he saw it. The realistic color and light Velasquez used provided Eakins with solutions to the problems in painting with which he had been struggling.

The six months that he spent in Spain proved to have great impact on his life as a painter and on his career as a teacher. The restrictions

and limitations of the teaching at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts were dramatized by the richness and vitality of the paintings he studied at the Prado. His painting style was greatly influenced by the painting methods he discovered from the works he studied there. The opaque painting style of the Paris studios gave way to the luminosity and light created by the use of spontaneous painting and glazing. Eakins attempted his first real painting just before leaving Spain. This first step he found extremely difficult and frustrating, but it must be remembered that his function as a painter for the past three years had been to paint from life in the studio following very specific guidelines, and to paint simple studies instead of entire compositions. He said, "Picture-making is new to me; there is the sun and gay colors and a hundred things you never see in a studio light, and ever so many botherations that no one out of the trade could ever guess at."[30] He worked on the small composition for nearly two months before deciding that it was finished. Shortly thereafter, he departed for paris to make final arrangements for his return to America.

In the 1870's, America was entering a period of rapid growth and expansion; the end of the Civil War brought increased wealth and leisure time, and interest in international affairs stimulated a new regard for art. Wealthy families were collecting art in America and abroad, filling their large houses with as much art as they could find. Coincidentally, Gerome's work was among the most fashionable artist's work to collect. Galleries in Philadelphia were importing French art in large quantities to meet the demand of the rich Philadelphians. When Eakins returned to this country, he became aware of the strong influences that French art

had on American painting; although the painters benefited from the technical advances in their work, they were also influenced by the superficiality which was also present in French art. Eakins was a part of the new generation of artists who had taken advantage of the sophistication of the European studios, and was eager to begin making his mark in the American art world.

The years between 1870 and 1876 were important ones for Eakins; during this period he completed several of his best known works. His fascination with the sciences, especially mathematics and anatomy, was responsible for the "correctness" associated with his superb draftsmanship. It was his explanation that:

> All the sciences are done in a simple way. In mathematics the complicated things are reduced to simple things. So it is in painting. You reduce the whole thing to simple factors.[31]

He enjoyed mathematics to such a degree that he frequently worked out problems in calculus as a way of relaxing his mind, following hours in the studio.[32] He was also an excellent photographer and used photography as a means of gathering scientific data for his paintings. His primary interest was painting, of course. He held the view that he was less interested in the sciences per se, than with science as it benefited his work. Goodrich says, "He was an artist absorbed in science, not a scientist practicing art."[33] The Gross Clinic, painted in 1876, is a testimony to his love of the sciences; not only in the technical procedures utilized in developing the painting, but in his fascination with anatomy and surgical practices.

By this time, Eakins had gained an early reputation as being the finest draftsman in the country, and volunteered to assist the drawing

professor at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1876. "Eakins was a born teacher, . . . always searching for knowledge and eager to impart it,"[34] claims Goodrich. He accepted the position of professor of painting and drawing in 1879 following the death of Christian Schussele, who held the position for many years.

Eakins began his career as a teacher with the same convictions which he had exercised in his personal artistic development. A major exception, however, was that he was eager to move the student from drawing plaster casts to life drawing as soon as they indicated any promise. He was also anxious that his students begin painting immediately upon their being moved into the life class, eliminating the usual preliminary drawings, and using full color. Eakins theory of painting and drawing was in direct contradiction to his own experiences at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, most likely because of his own boredom with drawing from the antique, and also because of the major shift in his approach to painting following his visit to Spain. In an interview concerning his teaching practices, Eakins was asked whether a student shouldn't first learn to draw before attempting to paint. He said:

> I think he should learn to draw with color. The brush is a more powerful and rapid tool than the point or stump. Very often, practically, before the student has had time to get his broadest masses of light and shade with either of these, he has forgotten what he is after. . . . The main thing that the brush secures is the instant grasp of the grand construction of a figure. There are no lines in nature . . . there are only form and color. . . . The first things to attend to in painting the model are the movement and the general color. The figure must balance, appear solid and of the right weight. The movement once understood, every detail of the action will be an integral part of the main continuous action; and every detail of color auxiliary to the main system of light and shade. The student should learn to block up his figure rapidly, and then give to any part of it the highest finish without injuring its unity.[35]

Eakins also held that modeling in clay was an important supplement to the painting students' understanding of form. In conjunction with life drawing, Eakins' students periodically worked in clay when it became evident that they were not achieving a proper understanding of depth or roundness. Anatomy was the most radical aspect of the curriculum at the Pennsylvania Academy, however, as it was not offered at any other art school in the world. Eakins firmly believed in a thorough understanding of the human form, and this was the most successful way of obtaining that knowledge. He felt that the total experience, drawing from life, modeling clay, and classes and demonstrations in anatomy and dissection, were the only means to arrive at a total understanding. When asked why knowledge of dissection of the human body is crucial to becoming an artist, Eakins said:

> He dissects simply to increase his knowledge to how beautiful objects are put together to the end that he may be able to imitate them. Even to refine upon natural beauty--to idealize, one must understand what it is that he is idealizing; otherwise, his idealization . . . becomes distortion, and distortion is ugliness.[36]

Eakins' involvement as a teacher was coincidental with his activity as an artist; he taught what he practiced, and he practiced what he taught. He advocated that to understand a form was to understand its total structure. "The whole tendency of his teaching was against mere surface naturalism,"[37] says Goodrich. Eakins felt that the artist should constantly try to increase his knowledge of a subject.

> Strain you brain more than your eye. . . . You can enjoy a thing to a certain limit. Then you must use intellect. A few hours' intelligent study is better than a whole day of thoughtless plodding.[38]

The insistence upon "hard work," as Eakins referred to it, generated great respect of his students for his teaching. He required discipline

among his students, but was very gentle in his interactions with them. This manifested in an article written by Charles Bregler, one of his students:

> His [Eakins] idea of a good instructor, and which he practiced, was to direct the students in the right direction and let them do their own thinking in regards to what they desired to accomplish in their chosen profession, this having the tendency to strengthen and make the serious student more self-reliant and discourage the frivolous.[39]

Bregler also revealed that Eakins was always interested in what his students were doing out of class:

> And would cheerfully go, and never refuse anyone who asked him to come to their home or studio to give them advice or criticism on the work they were doing.[40]

Eakins' teaching practices, although very unorthodox for the time, were most respected and appreciated by Fairman Rogers, the Chairman of the Committee of Instruction at the Academy. Both men shared a love for the sciences and a mutual respect for each other. An article written by Rogers outlining the program at the Academy, fully endorsing the innovative methods used by Eakins, appeared in a magazine called The Penn Monthly in 1881. In it, Rogers explains that the various aspects of the programs offered at the Academy, giving details of the studio practices Eakins used. The high performance standards in his studios were enforced by both men; this is clearly illustrated in an excerpt from the Rogers article:

> . . . the difficulties of attaining that knowledge that is necessary to a successful career as a producer of pictures and sculpture, are so great, that the four or five years of a professional life which are represented by the school work, have to be devoted to steady grinding application to that one thing. The objection that the school does not sufficiently teach the students picture-making may be met by saying that it is hardly within the province of a school to do so. It is better learned outside, in private studios, in the fields, from nature, by reading, from a careful study of other

> pictures, or engravings, or art exhibitions; and, in the library, the print room and the exhibitions which are held in the galleries, all freely open to the student. . . .[41]

The philosophy of instruction at the Academy echoed the very essence of the direction Eakins received under Gerome in Paris. Eakins respected the intelligence of his students and chose to allow them the freedom to seek out their own individual direction rather than to inflict his own style upon them. The earlier reference to an article by Charles Bregler makes this distinction: " . . . his ideas were never imposed on any of his students."[42]

The enthusiasm for Eakins' teaching, although commonly shared by his students and by Rogers, did not extend to the more conservative members of the Board of Directors of the Academy. When Rogers resigned from his position in 1883, he was succeeded by a less progressive thinker, and it was not long before Eakins' teaching practices came under close scrutiny. The proper young Philadelphia women who took Eakins' class to learn china painting and water color sketching were shocked by his frankness and objectivity. His popularity as a teacher continued despite these objections until 1886, when a few young ladies complained to the Board about an incident involving a lecture on muscles. Typical of his insistence on thorough knowledge of anatomy, Eakins removed the loin cloth of a male model in order to explain the function of the muscles when the pelvis is in motion. The Board promptly asked for his resignation which, following a brief protest from Eakins and his students, he reluctantly submitted.

Eakins never totally recovered from this episode. He had worked diligently to build a program which was unique in the country, if not

the world, and within a very short time the Academy returned to the mediocre, conventional curriculum he had worked so hard to change. Goodrich felt strongly that:

> The whole affair was one of the severest blows of his career. The school had meant much to him; for ten years it had played a large part in his life. Even the loyalty of so many of his pupils could not compensate for the loss of his official position, with its power and opportunities . . . The break with the Academy meant a loss of prestige as an artist, a portrait painter, a power in the art world, and a social being.[43]

Eakins continued to teach in the years that followed; in Philadelphia he taught at the Drexel Institute and at the newly-formed Art Students' League, and in New York at the National Academy of Design, Cooper Union, and the Art Students' League of New York. He was recognized as the "most learned anatomist in American Art,"[44] says Goodrich. At the height of his teaching career, Eakins commuted to New York as frequently as twice a week, often giving several lectures a day.[45] He was totally unswerving when it came to exercising his knowledge of anatomy; the content of his lectures around the mid 1890's, largely due to the continued opposition to his teaching practices.[46] Although he loved teaching and his students, he would not compromise his thoroughness for the sake of convention.

"One of the greatest teachers of the time was not wanted by the time,"[47] claims Goodrich. Throughout the rest of his life, Eakins suffered from the failure of society to appreciate and understand his views on teaching art. Charles Bregler, in the aforementioned article, says, "For if ever there was a man and artist who was misunderstood by his contemporaries, it was Eakins."[48] Goodrich summarizes his teaching with these comments:

> His students received a thorough, profound naturalistic training; what they made of it depended on their innate gifts. Most of them,

> as was inevitable, absorbed the smaller truths but missed the larger qualities which made his own art living, but which were instinctive with him and could not be imparted. No teacher can create geniuses. But a large proportion of the younger generation passed under him, and his influence on them was the soundest and most vital in the American teaching of time.[49]

Ironically, however, "He had no great students," claims Sylvan Schendler in his book titled Eakins.

> No one came to him with the broadness of culture or the psychic depth in the teaching years who might have used the human figure as he thought it had to be used, as the basis for some serious and provocative vision of human existence.[50]

Despite his dedication and committment to his career as an artist and teacher, he never encountered the student who was ideally suited to appreciate and perpetuate his unique contribution to art. A certain futility imbued Eakins' demand for excellence of his students when, in fact, the most capable students were following the same path of European style that he had. The lure of study in Paris, and the impact of the Impressionists on the new generation of artist, were enticing serious young artists. Yet, Eakins was the mentor for those students who chose to stay in America for their training, and he provided a solid foundation for those artists who studied first with him before departing for Paris. Robert Henri, one of his students, said:

> It was an excitement to hear his pupils talk of him. They believed in him as a great master, and there were stories of his power, his will in the pursuit of study, his unswerving adherence to his ideals, his great willingness to give, to help, and the pleasure he had in seeing the original and worthy crop out in a student's work.[51]

Eakins' career as a teacher ended formally with his decision to discontinuing lecturing, around 1895. He continued to see a few of his dedicated students privately, either in his studio or in theirs, and enjoyed his role as mentor on a much smaller scale. He began spending

more time in his studio, working mainly on portrait commissions. During this time, he began to receive much-deserved recognition for his paintings. In his last years, Eakins began to enjoy the renown for which he had worked so hard all his life. Now referred to as the "dean of American painters," he was interviewed for his opinion of the future of American Art. He said:

> If America is to produce great painters and if art students wish to assume a place in the history of the art of their country, their first desire should be to remain in America, to peer deeper in the heart of American life, rather than to spend their time abroad obtaining a superficial view of the art of the Old World. In the days when I studied abroad conditions were entirely different. The facilities for study in this country were meagre. There were even no life classes in our art schools and schools of painting. Naturally one had to seek instruction elsewhere, abroad. Today we need not do that. It would be far better for American art students and painters to study their own country and portray its life and types. . . . They must strike out for themselves, and only by doing this will we create a great and distinctly American Art.[52]

Following his death in 1916, Thomas Eakins was acclaimed "one of the three or four greatest artists this country ever produced,"[53] according to an art critic of the time. He was honored by a major retrospective exhibition of his paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and an even larger exhibit at the familiar Pennsylvania Academy, in his native Philadelphia.

Eakins' stature as one of the most significant artists and teachers this country has ever produced, has continued to increase. His dedication to the portrayal of the human form, combined with a thorough knowledge and understanding of the underlying structure of his subjects, has produced images which express insight and feeling.

> . . . underlying his relentless realism were deep humanity and intense personal emotion, revealing themselves not in subjective emotionalizing but in the creation of a powerful and penetrating record of things as he saw them.[54]

This account of the artistic development of Thomas Eakins provides the contemporary art educator with an opportunity to compare his teaching methodology with that of Eakins, and more distantly, with that of West. Although it was not intended that these two artists' lives be seen as opposites, their paths were indeed different from each other. It can also be seen, of course, that definite similarities existed as well. Each was clearly involved in the world of his day; participating in society, and interacting with the various lives which served as influences on their imitation of the art of their day, yet each arrived at meaningful, personal interpretations of what they perceived and felt. Whether Eakins would have become a different painter without Gerome's influence can only be imagined. Conversely, had West studied with a mentor, would his style of painting have been different?

The insights gained by these historical reflections must now be projected into the context of contemporary education. What remains is the task of relating what has been gained from this investigation, to the education of the artistically gifted individual in the present, and the future. What commonalities exist among the experiences of Benjamin West, Thomas Eakins, and gifted students today? The concluding chapter of this inquiry will address this question, and others as yet unanswered in this investigation. The final chapter will also bring the focus of thought from the past to the present, thereby establishing relevance to the contemporary educator.

Chapter IV

NOTES

[1]Gordon Hendricks. The Life and Work of Thomas Eakins. New York, N.Y.: Grossman Publishers. 1974. p. 9.

[2]Ibid, p. 17.

[3]Lloyd Goodrich. Thomas Eakins, His Life and Works. New York, N.Y.: Whitney Museum of American Art. 1933. p. 11.

[4]Albert Boime. The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century. New York, N.Y.: Phaidon. p. 4.

[5]Ibid, p. 18.

[6]Ibid, p. 19.

[7]Bruce Evans. Jean-Leon Gerome. Dayton, O.H.: The Dayton Art Institute. 1972. p. 13.

[8]Sylvan Schendler. Eakins. Toronto, Canada: Little, Brown and Company. 1967. p. 22.

[9]Goodrich, p. 14.

[10]Ibid. p. 14.

[11]Boime, p. 20.

[12]Goodrich, p. 16.

[13]Ibid, p. 16.

[14]Ibid, p. 17.

[15]Ibid, p. 17.

[16]Ibid, p. 18.

[17]Ibid, p. 19.

[18]Ibid, p. 19.

[19]Ibid, p. 19.

[20]Ibid, p. 20.

[21]Ibid, p. 21.

[22]Ibid, p. 23.

[23]Ibid, p. 25.

[24]Ibid, p. 25.

[25]Ibid, p. 26.

[26]Ibid, p. 26.

[27]Ibid, p. 26.

[28]Ibid, p. 28.

[29]Ibid, p. 29.

[30]Ibid, p. 30.

[31]Ibid, p. 40.

[32]Ibid, p. 40.

[33]Ibid, p. 41

[34]Ibid, p. 73.

[35]Ibid, p. 76.

[36]Ibid, p. 79.

[37]Ibid, p. 80.

[38]Ibid, p. 81.

[39]Charles Bregler. "Thomas Eakins as a Teacher," The Arts, October, 1931. p. 33.

[40]Ibid, p. 35.

[41]Fairman Rogers. "The Schools of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts," The Penn Monthly, June, 1881. p. 6.

[42]Bregler, p. 38.

[43]Goodrich, p. 90.

[44]Ibid, p. 92.

[45]Ibid, p. 92.

[46]Ibid, p. 94.

[47]Ibid, p. 94.

[48]Bregler, p. 38.

[49]Goodrich, p. 94.

[50]Schendler, p. 237.

[51]Goodrich, p. 84.

[52]Ibid, p. 139.

[53]Ibid, p. 141.

[54]Ibid, pp. 143-144.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations are a composite of perceptions gained from the preceding research, as well as from personal experience with gifted students over the past ten years. To establish the contemporary relevance of this investigation, an ERIC search of current literature was initiated to explore the possible changes that had taken place in gifted education since the 1979 conference in Aspen, Colorado, as reported in the previously cited Someone's Priority. The combined resources of the National Art Education Association and the Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, Virginia, were also consulted. The findings, however, were very disappointing. Although a flood of recent articles and texts have been written which focus on gifted/talented education in general, little of it addresses the specific concerns of this dissertation.

Unfortunately, these resources did not reveal what was being sought. Reliable guidelines for the identification of the artistically gifted student have not been formulated as yet. A sound, viable curriculum which meets the total needs of the student who is gifted in the arts is also in question. And, little attention has been paid to the development of effective teaching methods that could be utilized in meeting the needs of the gifted art student.

It appears, however, that the writing of this inquiry coincides with the desire of professional organizations to encourage efforts in

these directions. The National Art Education Association is requesting a call for papers which address the artistically gifted student. The Council for Exceptional Children is similarly interested in articles on this topic for publication in its journals. Both organizations point to increasing interest in this aspect of gifted education, although they agree that little of significance has surfaced to date.[1]

Despite their interest in the artistically gifted student and his education, the National Art Education Association and The Council for Exceptional Children were pessimistic with regard to the future of gifted education in general. Mr. John Grossi, Program Director at The Council for Exceptional Children, stated that the reason for his pessimism is due to the closing of the Office of Gifted and Talented Education, U. S. Department of Education, in the Fall of 1981. It was his projection that, because of the cut in federal funds to gifted education, the support of such programs would have to come from local and state departments of education.

A review of current education journals and periodicals revealed a variety of articles on gifted education, however. Due to the response obtained from the above organizations it was not surprising to find that the attention focused on broader, more traditional topics relative to gifted education; papers or articles concerning the artistically gifted were very infrequent.

Initially encouraging is a current article by Bruce Mitchell titled, An Update on the State of Gifted/Talented Education in the U. S.[2] Mitchell's study disclosed that despite fiscal hardships around the country, support for the education of the gifted and talented was increasing. His

article revealed that the past two years have witnessed a dramatic increase in the funding of gifted education, and that this increase was taking place on a national scale.[3] He further revealed that there is evidence that a growing number of people across the country are realizing the importance of meeting the needs of the gifted and talented student. Mitchell concluded that a dramatic upswing in the increase of funds which many states are allocating for gifted programs has occurred, despite the fact that the federal government has virtually ceased its support. The fact remains, however, that the economic picture for such programs is one of instability from one fiscal year to the next. It is encouraging, however, that despite the variety of restraints placed on state funds annually, programs for the gifted continue to survive.

An article which is especially relevant to this investigation criticizes the identification and selection procedures being used to screen gifted students. Sally M. Reis and Joseph S. Renzulli reported the findings of a study they conducted with gifted students, in an article titled A Case for a Broadened Conception of Giftedness.[4] Although their criticism of identification and selection procedures is not unique, their study did reveal that tests of achievement and intelligence are still being used today to identify students for gifted programs, and that these tests are generally the only criterion used to determine eligibility.[5] Important in their study is the attention given to the borderline students who fall in the "above-average" category; who missed qualifying as "gifted" by, in many cases, a narrow margin. Reis and Renzulli proposed that the traditional three to five percent population should be expanded to include the larger percentage of above average

students, resulting in a more realistic assessment of the number of students in a given school who might be classified as gifted. This study is especially significant since the artistically gifted student generally falls into the above-average classification, rather than the gifted category. This is due to the division of their energies among a variety of disciplines, including the development of their particular art form.

Other articles on gifted education were also of interest, but contained little or no insight into the actual education of the artistically gifted student. It becomes evident that since little exists in current literature to enlighten the focus of this paper, recommendations and projections relevant to educating the artistically gifted student must be culled from the references cited earlier, and from the educational and professional experiences of this author.

Among the initial concerns in establishing gifted programs are the procedures of identification and selection. Reflecting on the procedures used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, cited in previous chapters, shows us that very little change has taken place up to the present. Benjamin West was identified as gifted by his parents, peers, and the small community in which he lived. Similarly, Thomas Eakins was identified as such by his parents and the teachers of his grammar school in nineteenth century Philadelphia. Surprisingly, this subjective procedure is still recommended by the U. S. Office of Education in the 1980s.

I recommend that in addition to these practices, effort should be made to arrive at a more objective assessment of artistic giftedness. The following combined experiences are recommended as an objective procedure for determining potentially gifted students in the visual arts:

1. A review of recent art work--either portfolio or original work--of slides.

2. An evaluation of qualitative writings concerned with a variety of topics designed to reveal originality and depth of thought, and committment to a particular form of artistic expression.

3. An informal interview in which meaningful dialogue is shared between the student and intuitive arts professionals, focusing on feelings about self and the arts, motivation, and career aspirations.

4. A performance of a variety of artistic expressions in a monitored studio setting which demonstrate breadth and depth of thought, as well as quality of execution.

5. A composite of teacher, parent, arts professionals, and peer assessments regarding the artistic abilities and achievements of the individual, as well as his/her over-all performance in a variety of other disciplines.

This evaluation should be accompanied by the results of the usual standardized tests. Since neither adequately trained personnel nor reliable testing devices for determining artistic giftedness exists in public schools, tests of achievement or intelligence will be of assistance in the selection of students gifted in the arts. It most be noted, however, that these tests should be used as the supplementary, rather than the solitary, determinant of giftedness in the arts, since it was determined earlier in this paper that artistic or creative abilities are not successfully measured by standardized tests.

Once the population has been determined, the focus of concern shifts to ways of challenging these individuals. What kind of programs should be designed to stimulate the creative and intellectual development of the gifted in art? Who should teach them? What qualification should exist for the screening and selection of these teachers? These questions must be answered if the needs of the artistically gifted student are to be met within the context of public education.

It was stated earlier in this investigation that gifted students rightfully deserve gifted teachers. Authors Corinne D. Clendening and Ruth Ann Davis support this statement in their book Creating Programs for the Gifted. They concur with my view that, "The teacher of the gifted and talented must be a master teacher and a very special human being."[6] The philosophy of William H. Burton is cited by Clendening and Davis in a very lengthy description of teachers and teaching. Burton describes a master teacher as one who is " . . . able to adapt boldly, to invent, to create procedures to meet the ever changing demands of a given learning situation."[7] The following excerpt from Burton's analysis of teaching echoes the combined feelings of other references in this paper, as well as my own:

> Teaching demands continuous, imaginative anticipation of the mental processes of others, the ability to think quickly, to phrase questions and answers so as to stimulate thinking, the ability to keep intricate and subtle learning activities organized and moving toward a desirable outcome without at the same time dominating or coercing. . . . Teaching, more than most human activities, demands the use of judgment, imagination, initiative, and enthusiasm. Particularly does it demand the use of freely working, creative imagination.[8]

The development of the master teacher, or master surgeon, or master anything for that matter, demands a conscious pursuit of excellence in a given field. Dual concern for the development of expertise within a particular discipline, and for the mastery of techniques which enable the teacher to effectively motivate students, is inherent in the master teacher. Burton feels that such mastery can be developed through a continual analysis of one's own experience as an educator.[9] A prerequisite for becoming a master teacher is the realization that teaching is a vital, dynamic enterprise, rather than a static routine.

The enlightenment which Burton yields in his attitude toward master teachers and the teaching profession reinforces what has been said thus far in this investigation; that gifted students need gifted teachers to realize their fullest potential. Verification of this was provided earlier in this paper through the teaching experiences of Benjamin West at the "American School" in London, and Eakins' success as a teacher at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. Credibility as a teacher of the gifted is established by a thorough preparation in a particular discipline and a genuine love for teaching that subject, whether in the eighteenth, nineteenth or late-twentieth century. The able student is quick to detect the presence of either poor teacher training or superficial knowledge of the subject being taught.

In The Master Teachers, a current article by Benjamin S. Bloom, further credibility is given to the concept of "the gifted teach the gifted." A study conducted by Bloom revealed the manner in which the exceptionally talented individuals in the arts, the sciences, and athletics are discovered, encouraged, and developed. He strongly advocates that "master teachers play a major role in the development of talent in many fields;"[10] the students in his study viewed their teachers as vital not only to the development of their specific talent, but also to the realization of important human values. Bloom concluded that master teachers played a dominant role in the development of exceptional talent, and were responsible for attaining the very highest levels of achievement in a given field. He regarded these special teachers as "natural resources" since:

> . . . without them the development of students in cognitive fields, in the arts, in psychomotor fields, and in other fields and professions would be severely handicapped.[11]

A major recommendation, as a result of these combined findings, is that teachers must be as carefully screened to staff programs for the artistically gifted as are the participants. In a period of teacher surplus and job shortage, a high degree of selectivity must be exercised to employ the very best teachers possible. Further, it is recommended that the application criteria could be expanded to require the presentation of a lesson to a class of gifted students, and/or to include an interview by a panel of gifted students. Certainly to teach the bright should require that the teacher is bright also; teaching the talented should require that the teacher is also talented. If the caliber of education is to be elevated, it must begin with teachers of high quality.

The philosophical foundation of programs for the artistically gifted should focus on the individuals being served; such a philosophy begins with an understanding of the student's total needs. Such a philosophy is suggested by Arthur W. Combs in an article titled Humanistic Education: Too Tender for a Tough World. Combs prescribes a philosophy which places the student and his/her needs at the center of concern. In his definition of humanistic education, Combs states:

> Humanistic education is a committment to educational practice in which all facets of the teaching/learning process give major emphasis to the freedom, value, worth, dignity and integrity of persons.[12]

Along with the development of excellence in the arts, the student should become conscious of his/her total development, and work toward the achievement of the qualities in the above quote by Combs.

Among the references cited in this paper it should be evident to the reader that this researcher shares the view that the current educational system is in need of revision if the needs of the individual in

contemporary society are to be met. The standard curriculum as it exists in public education is inadequate to prepare students for meaningful lives; it instead prepares them to occupy a position commensurate with their intellectual capabilities, giving little attention to their needs as individuals. A balance must be established between the kind of education which is needed to prepare for a particular task in life, and that which enables the individual to establish relevant attitudes, values, and goals. It should be the concern of the educator, regardless of the discipline being taught, to be sensitive to the indivuduality of each student, and to ensure the continued development of these qualities.

This balance might be achieved in a variety of ways, but the most effective approach to this end is through humanistic interdisciplinary learning. That is, rather than unique, isolated fragments of education in which the student begins and ends his learning experience several times a day, these experiences should interrelate, thus, providing continuity of thinking throughout the day. Whether artist or mathematician, gymnast or scientist, the student becomes aware of the relationships among the various disciplines through a conscious, directed experience.

The gifted student, whether gifted artistically or academically (or both), is capable of substantial in-depth learning, often discovering relationships among the disciplines for himself. It is crucial for the artist to see himself as an integral part of a larger world, conscious of man's total achievements, as well as those which make up the microcosmic world of art. Therefore, his education must encompass both cognitive and affective experiences, striving to understand the interrelationship of art and chemistry, art and language, art and mathematics, etc., as well

as the relationships that exist among chemistry, language, and mathematics. Additionally, the young artist should pursue the cognitive aspects of art learning concurrently with his affective art experiences (learning about art, as well as about how to make art). Studies of the humanities are as important to the development of the young scientist as are scientific studies to the young artist. The technological society in which we live requires knowledge of the technology which we have created, as well as knowledge of society, which it is designed to serve. The artist can more easily find his place in society by balancing his education among these concerns.

It is interesting to compare the education of Benjamin West in provincial eighteenth century America, with the education of Thomas Eakins 100 years later in a more technological society. Both men became fluent in a foreign language, were well read in history and literature, were conversant in national and world politics, and were keenly involved in the sciences. In addition, both men were developing mastery of drawing, composition, and a knowledge of the history of art. West and Eakins were well-educated artists for their time, and were involved members of their society. Both men also become accomplished artists and continued their involvement in the larger world of which art was an integral part.

It is also significant to compare the educational experiences of West and Eakins with those of the young artist in contemporary America. During the Industrial Revolution, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, educational curricula evolved to serve an increasingly technological society. Specialized minds, necessary to operate and direct this

technology, were in great demand. The past twenty years has seen a phenomenal expansion of technology, and an increasingly insecure economic situation in this country. Educational programs which seem unrelated to the larger world of technology, or which are unable to justify themselves with sufficient enrollment (and there appears to be a relationship between these two factors), face annual survival confrontations with budget committees. To find a balanced educational program within such a bleak environment is a challenge to the student who is gifted in the arts, since his programs are among the first to be threatened. It is anticipated, however, that despite the current economic gloom, the needs of the artistically gifted will become a priority in the near future, just as the academically gifted student has been the focus in many states in recent years.

What kind of program would best suit the artistically gifted student? Could the public school offer a challenging program for this student that would provide both the artistic and intellectual stimulation needed? Is it likely that Benjamin West could mature as an artist in the 1980s without professional direction? Or, is the path taken by Thomas Eakins the preferred course for the young artist today? I suggest that perhaps both modes of artistic development could be satisfied within the structure of public education.

A balanced program for the artistically gifted student should include courses in art history, arts appreciation, philosophy, social studies, English literature, mathematics, computer science, foreign language, biology, chemistry and physics, in addition to meaningful experiences in various studio courses. Such a program should also help the student

develop effective communication skills through courses such as creative writing and public speaking, so essential to the articulation of the subjective thoughts and feelings that concern an artist's work. A program such as this varies only slightly from the current curriculum offered by the majority of high schools in America, but the addition of art history, arts appreciation, and philosophy would greatly benefit the gifted population. Once this curriculum is established, it is important that teachers support and exercise an interdisciplinary approach in their instruction to facilitate the student's understanding of relationships that exist among the areas of learning being experienced. Such a task is an ambitious one, to be sure. Much of this is already taking place in some classrooms, however, where motivated educators view learning as the primary objective, rather than the communication of information which has little or no relationship to the student and his total education.

The visual arts are a part of the total accomplishments of man, and should be regarded as such. How does the artist create meaningful art unless he understands the place of art in the larger world, and has knowledge of the influence of other disciplines on the development of his thinking? The art education of the gifted student must be as intensive in the area of art as would be expected in chemistry, physics, or calculus. The teacher of this special student must become an expert in his knowledge of art, well-versed in other areas of learning, and should approach the teaching of art as a serious, intellectual pursuit. Art experiences which are presented to the student should challenge his creative and intellectual abilities; problems assigned should be concerned with both perception and imagination; and, the art experiences of the student should relate to his total learning experience.

Existing programs[13] that approach the caliber of what has been described have been unsuccessful in creating the necessary balance of intellectual and artistic experience. Such programs might lead one to believe the idea that the intellect develops separately from artistic accomplishment, since the emphasis is on longer hours in the studio. A better situation might be created if an equal emphasis is placed on the development of the student's total potential--artistic and intellectual.

A program that is nearly ideal is in existence today, and it has succeeded in striking this balance. The Interlochen Arts Academy, Interlochen, Michigan, attempts to develop the student to his fullest potential, academically and artistically, on one campus. Unlike the majority of other schools for the artistically gifted which generally require bussing the student to a "magnet" school for the arts, the Interlochen Arts Academy is a coeducational boarding school. Interlochen provides a four-year program for grades nine through twelve, featuring a highly specialized curriculum for the performing, visual and literary arts, with an equal emphasis on academics. Intensive training is offered in music, visual arts, dance, theatre, and creative writing balanced by accelerated college-preparatory courses in mathematics, chemistry, physics, foreign language, English and humanities. Young artists from nearly every state, as well as from many foreign countries, live and study in an environment which is conducive to their gradual emergence as promising performers, artists and writers.

The faculty is comprised of a high percentage of practicing artists, as well as teachers of academic subjects who have a keen interest in the arts and who understand the needs of the artist/student. A close bond is

established between each faculty member and his "adopted" family of five or six students--a practice which assigns surrogate parenthood to each faculty member (who also acts as counselor, friend and advisor to his charges). The faculty and students create a strong sense of community during the long winter months in Michigan. The personal attention given to the student, whether academically, artistically, or individually as a friend, is undoubtedly one of the primary reasons for Interlochen's success in educating the young artist.

Additionally, small classes, a high level of individual attention, strong student motivation, and high teacher expectations, contribute to the over-all success at Interlochen.

Another very important reason for the continuing strength of the educational experience at Interlochen is that it is directed by a team of arts administrators. Members of Interlochen's administrative staff include an orchestra conductor, a choral director, a leader of a national writing symposium, and a chairperson of a national visual arts competition. The over-riding philosophy is that the total curriculum is geared to talent in the arts, and a student is able to reach toward the development of his potential without the usual limitations built into courses designed for the non-arts student.

The selection procedure at Interlochen insures that a high percentage of success will be experienced by the students. The intellectual and the artistic potential of the applicant is emphasized; the performing artist is required to submit either audio- or videotapes of a performance, and the visual artist and writing student is required to submit a portfolio. All are asked to fill out the usual application forms, which

include teacher recommendations and transcripts of academic performancce. A small number of applicants is accepted each year, and the students who are accepted continue to fall in the upper ranges on tests of achievement, and demonstrate a high level of artistic ability. Interlochen produces a proportionately high number of National Merit Finalists, and Presidential Scholars in the Arts Finalists; many of its graduating seniors are accepted by prestigious colleges and universities, often on advanced standing. It is not unusual that upon graduation from Interlochen, a student is asked to join the troupe of a major dance company or to audition for an opera company or symphony orchestra.

However, despite Interlochen's success in meeting the needs of the artistically gifted student, it is a private institution and relatively expensive to attend. Although scholarships are available, the majority of students fall into the affluent category--aid is available for the needy student, but in many cases the balance due still surpasses the financial limits of many parents. The relevance of this investigation hinges upon the availability of programs like the one at Interlochen, but within the context of public education, and at far less cost to the student. Can the same characteristics which contribute to the success of students at Interlochen be duplicated in nigh schools today, and at public expense? Certainly there have been attempts by various school districts to meet these special needs, and undoubtedly they are meeting at least the artistic needs of the student. However, the desired intellectual and artistic balance has not yet been realized in public schools, as evidenced by earlier references.

The time for the implementation of such a program for the artistically gifted is right. A fusion of Interlochen's ideal qualities and public school accountability might produce such a program.

My personal efforts over the past two years to implement such a program have yielded very encouraging results. Teaching experiences at Interlochen for several summers, and a long history of public classroom performance, provides sufficient foundation for curricular design. As Director of the Visual Arts Program at Interlochen this past summer, I was given the ideal opportunity to observe artistically gifted students in action while considering methods of improving an already excellent experience. As Chairman of the Fine and Performing Arts Department at South Lakes High School, Reston, Virginia, close observation of a similar population of motivated students has provided similar insights. Involvement with the Fairfax County Association for the Gifted over the past year resulted in a presentation of the "arts and the gifted" at one of their meetings. This generated new concern for the inclusion of arts experiences in programs for the academically gifted, as well as increased interest in establishing a school for the arts.

A committee of artists, educators, administrators, and arts advocates from the community was appointed by the Superintendent of Schools to study the feasibility of a school for the arts to provide intensive arts experiences for gifted students. Although the bureaucratic machinery is moving slowly, it is significant that such a program is being considered at all in a school system which has a long history of economic accountability. This "school" would begin as a pilot program, offered on Saturday so as not to compete with the current emphasis on academic studies in Fairfax

County. The exciting possibility exists of providing the Interlochen "experience" within the context of public school funding.

Public readiness to meet the needs of the artistically gifted student is manifested in the Fine and Performing Arts Department at South Lakes High School. As a member of a committee which formed to evaluate programs for the gifted student, I proposed the addition of a course in art history, and a course in interdisciplinary studies--both courses have been implemented this year. As the teacher of these new courses, it is my objective not only to appeal to the artistically gifted student, but also to the academically gifted student who might otherwise avoid courses in art. The enrollment of these two courses is predominantly from the academic sector of the school population, although several artistically gifted students participate as well. The majority of students taking the art history course have opted to register for possible college credit through the Advanced Placement Programs of the Educational Testing System, Princeton, New Jersey. Students in the Interdisciplinary Studies course, which meets after school three days a week, have chosen to participate on a pass/fail basis to eliminate the emphasis on the grade they might receive in the class. To date, both courses operate on a high motivational level. Students are eager to learn about art and philosophy, and often linger after class to continue discussions about these "new" areas of learning they are experiencing. For the student who is gifted in the arts, a new concern for learning <u>about</u> art expands his personal involvement in the <u>making</u> of art. For the student who is academically gifted, there is eagerness to remedy his limited knowledge of the arts.

The balanced program offered by the Interlochen Arts Academy is already becoming a reality within the public school context. It is also exciting that in addition to satisfying the objective of balance or well-roundedness for the visual arts student, a balance is being created for an even larger number of students whose predetermined abilities lie in academic areas of learning. Although these students are unwilling to "risk" mediocre performance in a studio class, they are very willing to participate on the more familiar cognitive level. The rich experience being shared by this combination of students is rare and extremely gratifying. More importantly, however, is their awareness of the need to pursue a broader learning spectrum than before, and that the relationships among different disciplines expand the insights and total understanding of whatever is being studied.

A review of the preceding chapters of this investigation reveals that the education of the artistically gifted student has gone nearly full cycle. The development of Benjamin West as a gifted artist in the eighteenth century, within a comparatively primitive educational context, took place with regard to the larger world of knowledge. West experienced a rather typical education for the time, although when compared with the contemporary art student his knowledge included broader concerns. History, language, literature, music and science were an integral part of his artistic development. Similarly, the scientist of the eighteenth century become knowledgeable of the same disciplines as West including art, of course.

Thomas Eakins also developed his artistic abilities within the broader concerns of academic learning one hundred years later. It must

be remembered that his unique artistic vision was strongly influenced by extensive experiences in the sciences, and that he viewed advanced forms of mathematics as a form of relaxation or entertainment. Among his close friends were physicians, scientists, writers and musicians. Conversely, the education of these individuals included knowledge of the arts in additon to specific learning relevant to their profession. Both West and Eakins acquired a specialized education balanced by both broad and in-depth experiences in other areas of learning.

The interim years, beginning with the early 1900s, have produced a variety of educational paradigms, the majority of which focused on the need to develop a liberally-educated individual. The technological race which began with the sputnik era of the 1950s, however, generated an increasingly convergent focus on specialized education. Unfortunately, the arts were not considered important enough for inclusion in the development of the technologist; they become an alternative. An "either-or" philosophy seems to have developed as a result. Afrer 30 years of technologically-oriented education, it is becoming apparent that a humanistic form of education should supplant the existing narrowly-conceived curriculum.

This brings us to the 1980s, and the education of the artistically gifted student in a technological society. Rather than fall prey to the "either-or" philosophy, the contemporary artist should not only be aware of the technological advances, but utilize these new tools in the advancement of his own work. However, a constant surveillance should be maintained to protect the fragile balance between "cognition and feeling," cited earlier by Carl Jung.

The development of the contemporary artist is dependent upon a variety of interrelated factors. It is not sufficient to pursue only the learning of techniques and materials of the artist, and of the history of art; but, also the history of thought, of ideas and ideals, and the development of civilization through its social, scientific, political, and cultural unfolding. It is vital that the artist relates to the larger world, and to the knowledge that lies outside his immediate domain. The decisions or circumstances which dictate the path of development, whether through one's own efforts or through the influence of a mentor, will determine his particular form of visual expression. The mode of development is not the ultimate question, however. Rather, it is that the young artist comprehends his role in the artistic tradition of which he is becoming a part, and the relationship of this tradition to the larger world of which he must also become a part.

Chapter V

NOTES

[1]Interviews with Dr. John J. Mahlmann, Executive Director of the National Art Education Association; and, John Grossi, Program Director, the Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, Virginia.

[2]Bruce M. Mitchell. An Update on the State of Gifted/Talented Education in the U. S. Phi Delta Kappa. January 1982. p. 357.

[3]Ibid, p. 357.

[4]Sally M. Reis and Joseph S. Renzulli. A Case for A Broadened Conception of Giftedness. Phi Delta Kappa. May 1982. p. 619.

[5]Ibid, p. 619.

[6]Corinne P. Clendening and Ruth Ann Davis. Creating Programs for the Gifted. New York: R. R. Bowker Company. 1980. p. 68.

[7]Ibid, p. 68.

[8]Ibid, p. 69.

[9]Ibid, p. 69.

[10]Benjamin S. Bloom. The Master Teachers. Phi Delta Kappa. June 1982.

[11]Ibid, p. 715.

[12]Arthur W. Combs. Humanistic Education: Too Tender for a Tough World. February 1981. p. 446.

[13]New York High School for the Arts; Houston School for the Arts; North Carolina Center for the Arts; et al.

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VITA

Raymond Gene Wilkins was born in Lewistown, Pennsylvania, where he graduated from high school in 1955. He attended the Pennsylvania State University, receiving a B.S. degree in Art Education in 1963, the same year he began his teaching career in Fairfax County, Virginia.

Wilkins began graduate study in January 1971 at the George Washington University, Washington, D.C., and received the Master of Fine Arts degree in Painting in May 1973. He won the graduate prize in Painting during his first term of study there and graduated with honors. The years that followed involved teaching at the high school and community college level, as well as in summer programs such as the Governor's School for the Gifted, Mary Washington College, Fredericksburg, Virginia. In addition to his activity as a teacher, he also was a practicing artist. He has won many prizes and awards for his paintings and has exhibited at various galleries in the Washington area; the most noteworthy gallery experiences include the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia, the Virginia Museum, and the purchase of a drawing by the National Museum of American Art.

The period between September 1980 and the present has included a year in residence at The Pennsylvania State University as a graduate assistant; the study of philosophy, painting, and emphasis on the education of the artistically gifted student; and, participation in two art exhibitions at the University. Upon completing the requirements for the Ph.D. degree, Wilkins returned to his position as Chairman of the Fine and Performing Arts Department at South Lakes High School, Reston, Virginia, and also as Director of the Visual Arts Summer Program at the Interlochen Center for the Arts, Interlochen, Michigan.